

PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AND THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN BALI: A SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF BALI LEGISLATIVE ELECTION

Siti Sadiyatunnimah¹, Maria Bellen Purba²

^{1,2}Universitas Nasional Political Science Department Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author ; sadiyatunnimah@civitas.unas.ac.id

Abstract:

This study examines the impact of patriarchal culture on the low political representation of women in legislative election in Bali. The deeply rooted patriarchal system in Bali contributes to the structural subordination of women in social, economic, and political spheres. Drawing on patriarchal theory and political capital theory, this study conceptualizes women's marginal political position as the result of gendered power relations that restrict access to social networks, economic resources, and institutional support necessary for electoral competition. Although Hindu philosophy emphasize balance and gender equality, cultural interpretations and daily social practices often position women in subordinate roles. This research employs a qualitative methodology, including in-depth interviews and literature review, to explore the issue comprehensively. Informants include politicians, academics, religious and traditional leaders, women's rights activists, and local community members. The findings reveal that patriarchal culture significantly shapes women's limited access and opportunities. Socially, domestic responsibilities and ritual obligations impose a heavy burden on Balinese women, restricting their ability to participate in public activities and political organizations. Economically, women shoulder multiple responsibilities, reducing their capacity to develop political capital. Politically, gender stereotypes, limited networks, high political costs, and the perception of politics as masculine domain significantly hinder women's participation. Although the 30 percent quota requirement for female candidacy is formally fulfilled, it does not translate into substantive representation. This study contributes theoretically by identifying context-specific gendered political barriers in Bali and offers practical recommendations to strengthen women's representation in local politics.

Keywords: *patriarchy, women's political representation, legislative, election, gender*

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INTRODUCTION

Women's political representation is widely recognized as a key indicator of democratic quality. Indonesia, as a democratic state, has adopted various legal instruments to promote gender equality in political participation, including the implementation of a minimum 30 percent quota for women on legislative candidate lists. However, existing studies reveal that such regulatory measures do not automatically translate into substantive representation, particularly in regions where socio-cultural structures remain deeply attached (Anggriani et al., 2024; Failaq & Monati, 2023; Fitri et al., 2025) Bali is a prominent example of this paradox.

As a region characterized by strong traditions, customary (adat) institutions, and intensive religious rituals, Bali presents a distinctive context for examining gender relations. Philosophically, Hindu teaching emphasize balance and complementarity between men and women, as reflected in the concept of *Rwabhineda* and *Ardhanariswari*. In practice, however, kindship system, the *purusa* lineage structure, and customary role division often position men as dominant figures within families and adat communities ((Ayu et al., 2022; I.G.A Mirah Laksmi Utari et al., 2025).

Consequently, Balinese women are frequently associated with domestic tasks and ritual obligations, whereas public spheres, including political participation, are culturally coded as masculine domains (Gqola et al., 2024; Tubuh et al., 2023). These cultural constructions have significant implications for women's political participation. Domestic workloads and extensive ritual responsibilities limit women's time, mobility, and capacity to engage in social organizations or political activities. Research constantly demonstrates that Balinese women face heavier multiple burdens than men, which reduces their opportunities to build social, economic, and political capital (Fernando & Galuh Larasati, 2025; Oryza & Adhi Cahya Fahadayna, 2024; Wiasti & Suarsana, 2023). This condition is reflected in electoral outcomes: although all political parties in Bali complied with the 30 percent quota during the legislative election, less than 20 percent seats were won by women (Ras et al., 2019; Silaban et al., 2009).

Beyond cultural factors, structural barriers within political parties further reinforce gender disparities. Candidate recruitment processes are still dominated by patriarchal networks that privilege male patronage, internal alliances, and strong political capital, resources that are often less accessible to women (Aspinall et al., 2021; Birnir et al., 2025; Soetjipto, 2023). Even when women are nominated, they are frequently placed in non-competitive positions, either through

unfavorable ballot rankings or by being assigned to difficult electoral districts (Pramudita et al., 2024).

In comparative perspective, evidence from India suggest that even stronger forms of affirmation, such as reserved seats for women, do not fully eliminate cultural and structural impediments (Anju & Mamta, 2024). This underscores that the effectiveness of gender quotas is strongly mediated by socio-cultural contexts and the extent to which patriarchal norm remains influential.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to analyze how institutionalized patriarchal culture within Balinese adat structures contributes to the under-representation of women in local politics. Employing a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and literature analysis, this study examines how patriarchy operates across the social, economic, and political dimensions of Balinese women's lives, and how these intersecting constraints shaped the outcome of Bali's legislative elections. The study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between local culture and gender inequality in political participation, while offering strategic recommendations for strengthening substantive political representation for women in Bali.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly discussions on women's political representation in Indonesia largely converge on the gap between formal gender equality and substantive political outcomes (Rana Rajaba Sakti & Nurdiansyah, 2024). Since the post-reform era, Indonesia has implemented affirmative action policies mandating a minimum 30 percent quota for women candidates in legislative elections (Selinaswati, 2018). However, numerous studies demonstrate that the presence of women on candidate lists does not necessarily lead to proportional electoral success or substantive representation (Agustin Wulandari, 2023; Anggriani et al., 2024; Failaq & Monati, 2023).

Research examining the effectiveness of gender quotas highlights structural limitations within electoral system and political parties. Some scholar argue that quotas are often treated as administrative obligations rather than instruments for political empowerment. As a result, women candidates are frequently placed in non-strategic electoral positions, limiting their chances of winning seats (Anggriani et al., 2024; Keisya Damayanti et al., 2024). Therefore, while the quota policy increases descriptive representation at nomination stage, it has yet to

significantly transform policy making processes or gender-responsive legislation (Fitri et al., 2025).

Several studies also underline the importance of party support and internal recruitment mechanism. Related research suggest that political parties remain central gatekeepers whose patriarchal organizational cultures continue to marginalize women candidates, particularly younger women and those without strong political networks (Pramudita et al., 2024) and (Soetjipto, 2023). These findings indicate that institutional barriers within parties reinforce gender inequality, even under affirmative action frameworks.

Beyond institutional design, scholars increasingly emphasize patriarchy as a key analytical framework for understanding women's underrepresentation. Patriarchal power is conceptualized as a historically embedded structure that shapes access to authority and public decision making (Pierik, 2022). In Indonesia context, patriarchal attitudes among voters and party elites significantly effect women's electoral fortunes, particularly in the 2024 legislative elections (Birnir et al., 2025).

Women's political success in Indonesia is mediated by informal power structures, patronage networks, and political capital (Sadiyatunnimah, 2021). These dynamics often disadvantage women, who tend to have weaker access to elite networks and campaign resources (Aspinall et al., 2021). Similarly, women's representation within mass-based Islamic parties remains constrained by ideological interpretations and gender norms embedded within party organizations (Kawwami, 2024).

Taken together, these studies suggest that women's political marginalization cannot be explained solely by legal or institutional shortcomings. Instead, it reflects deeper gendered power relations that operate across formal political institutions and informal socio-cultural networks.

The Balinese context presents a distinct configuration of patriarchy shaped by adat (customary law), kinship systems, and religious practices. Studies focusing on Bali consistently highlight the persistence of gender hierarchy despite philosophical ideals of balance and harmony within Hindu teachings (Made et al., 2025). Studies in Bali consistently document the low electoral success of women candidates, attributing this pattern to deeply entrenched cultural expectations surrounding gender roles and leadership (Ras et al., 2019) and (Silaban et al., 2009).

Subsequent research has further demonstrated the dominance of purisa ideology in Balinese Hindu society, showing how lineage systems and decision-making practices systematically privilege men over women (I.G.A Mirah Laksmi Utari et al., 2025). Customary institutions (adat) in Bali also been identified as important sites of patriarchal reproduction, reinforcing women's subordinate positions in both domestic and public spheres (Ayu et al., 2022).

From an ecofeminist perspective, Balinese women experience layered subordination across economic, environmental, and cultural domains, highlighting that patriarchy in Bali is not merely symbolic but also materially in everyday life (Wiasti & Suarsana, 2023). These conditions directly affect women's time, labor, and political agency, thereby limiting their opportunities for sustained political participation.

The literature also highlights the intersection between social roles, economic responsibilities, and political participation. Women's political engagement is constrained by unequal divisions of labor within households and communities, which limit their time and capacity to participate in political activities (Fernando & Galuh Larasati, 2025). Limited women's political representation has further been shown to produce tangible consequences for gender sensitive policy outcomes, particularly in areas such as health and social welfare (Oryza & Adhi Cahya Fahadayna, 2024).

Studies focusing on women legislators at the regional level demonstrate that when women do gain political office, they often face heightened expectations to balance public responsibilities with domestic obligations, reinforcing persistent gender norms governing everyday life (Tiran et al., 2023).

Comparative Perspectives: Lessons from India

Comparative studies contribute additional insights into the relationship between culture and women's political representation. Evidence from India shows that strong affirmative action policies do not automatically dismantle patriarchal norms or gendered political practices (Anju & Mamta, 2024). Despite formal guarantees, women politicians in India continue to face resistance rooted in cultural perceptions of leadership and authority, underscoring the limits of quota-based reforms in patriarchal societies.

The comparative perspective is particularly relevant for Balinese case, as it highlights the limits of institutional reform in the absence of broader socio-cultural transformation. Both contexts suggest that gender quotas must be accompanied by efforts to challenge patriarchal norms at the community and institutional levels.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into women's political representation in Indonesia and Bali, most focus either on institutional mechanism or cultural explanations in isolation. There remains a limited body of research that systematically examines how patriarchal culture operates simultaneously across social, economic, and political dimensions to shape women's electoral outcomes, particularly in the context of Bali's legislative elections.

This study addresses this gap by integrating cultural analysis with political and economic perspectives, offering a context specific examination of how institutionalized patriarchy within Balinese society constrain women's access to political representation. By doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gendered political barriers in local democracies.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine how patriarchal culture shapes the low political representation of women in Bali's legislative elections. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this research because the issue under investigation involves cultural norms, gendered power relations, and lived experiences that operate beyond formal institutional arrangements. Previous studies on women's political representation in Indonesia have demonstrated that qualitative methods are effective for capturing informal political processes, party dynamics, and socio-cultural constraints that are often invisible in qualitative data (Aspinall et al., 2021; Soetjipto, 2023). Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring context specific phenomena and understanding how social structures are interpreted and reproduced by actors within a given setting.

The research is designed as an explanatory qualitative study. This design allows for an in-depth examination of how patriarchy is embedded in social practices, adat institutions, and political structures in Bali. Exploratory qualitative designs have been widely used in studies addressing gender, culture, and political participation, particularly where local context and meaning making processes play a central role. Rather than testing predefined hypotheses, this study seeks to understand the mechanism through which patriarchal norms influence women's access to political opportunity.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and literature analysis. In-depth interviews were chosen as the primary method because they enable researchers to explore personal experiences, perceptions, and

interpretations and gendered political barriers. Prior research on women politicians and political parties in Indonesia has shown that interviews are crucial for uncovering informal recruitment practices, gender bias, and political costs that are rarely documented in official records. The interviews were semi-structures, allowing the researcher to follow a guiding framework while remaining responsive to issues raised by informants.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives. The study involved women politicians, political party, academics, religious and adat leaders, women's rights activists, and local community members in Bali. This diversity of informants was intended to capture multiple perspectives on how patriarchy operates across social, economic, and political domains. Snowball sampling was subsequently used to reach additional informants, particularly those embedded within political parties and adat institutions, where access is often limited. Similar sampling strategies have been employed in previous studies examining women's political participation at the local level.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were read iteratively to identify recurring patterns and meanings related to gender roles, domestic and ritual responsibilities, access to political networks, economic constraints, and party recruitment processes. These themes reflect dimensions that have been highlighted in earlier researches as key barriers to women's political representation (Agustin Wulandari, 2023). The analysis focused on how these themes intersect, illustrating the cumulative effects of patriarchy across different spheres of women's lives rather than treating each factor in isolation.

Ethical considerations were integral to the research process. All informants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided voluntary consent prior participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by removing identifying information from transcripts and analysis, particularly given the sensitivity of discussing internal party dynamics and adat authority. The research was conducted with respect for local cultural norms while maintaining critical academic independence, a balance that has been emphasized as essential in studies of gender and politics in culturally embedded context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Bali is celebrated for its cultural richness, religious traditions, and social harmony. However, beneath this cultural vibrancy lies a complex system of gender

relations shaped by deeply embedded patriarchal norms. Gender roles in Balinese society are historically regulated through adat, kinship system, and religious practices that have structured daily life for generations. While Balinese Hindu philosophy emphasizes balance and harmony between masculine and feminine principles, social practices frequently diverge from these ideals.

Empirical findings from this study confirm that patriarchy remains a dominant cultural framework in Balinese society. Interviews with local community members, academics, cultural figures, activists, and politicians reveal broad agreement that patriarchal norms continue to shape social expectations and gender hierarchies. Patriarchy is commonly understood as a system that prioritizes men's authority in public decision making while positioning women primarily as caretakers of family harmony and ritual obligations. Although these roles are culturally valued, they simultaneously limit women's access to public power leadership.

From the perspective of adat institutions, patriarchy is often perceived as a natural and non-problematic aspect of Balinese tradition. Male community members frequently regard patriarchal arrangements as part of inherited cultural identity rather than as a source of inequality. As long as these arrangements are perceived not to overtly demean women. They are considered legitimate and acceptable. This perception illustrates how patriarchy operates through normalization, rendering gender hierarchies invisible and resistant to critique.

Bali's decentralization within Indonesia further reinforces the authority of local adat and cultural norms. Customary governance structure coexists with formal political institutions, granting adat leaders significant influence over social life. Hinduism plays a central role in shaping these structures, as religious values are closely integrated with adat regulations and cultural practices. Religion, adat, and culture thus form an inseparable triad that governs moral values, social obligations, and communal authority in Bali.

At the same time, debates persist regarding the relationship between Hinduism and patriarchy, a tension that emerged clearly from the interview data. Some informants argue that patriarchy derives not from religious doctrine but from cultural interpretations and social practices. Classical Hindu text such as the Vedas and Upanishads emphasize equality, autonomy, and spiritual unity beyond gender distinctions. Central theological concepts such as atman transcend bodily categories, suggesting that spiritual essence is not gendered. The figure of Ardhanarishwari, symbolizing the unity of masculine (purusa) and feminine

(pradana) principles, further reflects an ideal of balance rather than hierarchy (I.G.A Mirah Laksmi Utari et al., 2025).

However, based on interviews with Balinese academics, when these philosophical concepts are translated into everyday social arrangements, their meanings often shift. The purusa-pradana concept is frequently interpreted in a narrow, literal manner that privileges male lineage, inheritance, and leadership. In practice, purusa is associated with authority, continuity of family name, and public leadership, while pradana is associated with domesticity and support roles. This interpretative shift illustrates how patriarchal culture is sustained not through theology itself, but through selective cultural readings that align with male-dominated social structure.

Customary regulations such as awig-awig and pararem are formally gender-neutral, applying equally to all members of the village (krama desa). In principle, these rules recognize both krama lanang (male members) and krama istri (female members) as holders of rights and obligations. Yet in practice, participation in adat decision making remains heavily male-dominated (I.G.A Mirah Laksmi Utari et al., 2025). Leadership positions within banjar and desa adat are overwhelmingly held by men, reinforcing gendered authority patterns that marginalize women's voices in communal governance.

The finding indicates that patriarchal culture in Bali has tangible and multi-layered impacts on women's lives. These impacts manifest most strongly across social, economic, and political dimensions, which together shape women's opportunities and constraints.

Socially, patriarchy imposes a disproportionate burden on Balinese women through expectations of domestic labor and ritual responsibility. Women are expected to manage household duties while simultaneously preparing offerings and participating in numerous religious ceremonies. Life-cycle rituals such as weddings, tooth-filling ceremonies, child rituals, and cremation rites require extensive time, labor, and coordination, responsibilities that fall largely on women.

This accumulation of responsibilities creates what many informants describe as a "multiple burden". Beyond domestic work, women are also expected to maintain social harmony within extended families and communities. These expectations significantly reduce women's time and energy for self-development, education, and participation in civic or political organizations.

Patriarchal socialization begins within the family. Girls are often raised with the expectation that they will eventually join their husband's household, while

boys are viewed as lineage bearers and future leaders. As a result, families tend to prioritize boys' education, while girls are encouraged to develop domestic skills and adaptability. This early differentiation shapes women's self-confidence and aspirations, reinforcing perceptions of inferiority and dependence.

Social norms that leadership as a male attribute further marginalize women. Women who express political ambition may be viewed as deviating from accepted gender roles, facing social scrutiny or discouragement. These norms not only restrict women's external opportunities but also shape internalized beliefs about their own capabilities.

Economically, the impact of patriarchy in Bali is more complex and sometimes contradictory. On one hand, women are highly active in economic life, particularly in agriculture, small trade, tourism, and informal enterprises. Many households rely significantly on women's income, and women are often perceived as financially responsible and resilient.

On the other hand, patriarchal norms continue to shape control over economic resources and social valuation of labor. Even when women contribute substantially to household income, men are often regarded as primary breadwinners and decision makers. In cases where women earn more than men, male pride and social expectations may be threatened, revealing persistent patriarchal attitudes beneath apparent economic equality.

Economic pressures in Bali are intensified by the high costs associated with adat and religious obligations. These costs affect both men and women, but women often shoulder the responsibility of managing limited resources while ensuring ritual compliance. Limited access to education and formal employment further constrains women's ability to accumulate economic capital, which is essential for political participation.

Politically, patriarchal culture constitutes one of the most significant barriers to women's participation and representation. Although formal political rights are equal for men and women, informal norms and structural constraints severely limit women's political opportunities. Time constraints resulting from domestic and ritual responsibilities reduce women's ability to engage in political organizations, build networks, and participate in party activities.

Politics in Bali, as in much of Indonesia, is widely perceived as a masculine and competitive arena requiring extensive networking. Financial resources, and public visibility. These requirements align more closely with men's social positioning. While women's limited access to political capital places them at a

disadvantage. The high costs of political campaigns further exacerbate this inequality.

Political parties formally comply with 30 percent quota for female candidates, but women are often nominated merely to fulfill administrative requirements. Many women candidates receive minimal party support unfavorable ballot positions, or placement in difficult electoral districts. As a result, the quota policy increases descriptive representation at the nomination stage without producing substantive electoral outcomes.

Women politicians report that even when elected, their voices are frequently marginalized within legislative bodies. With women constituting a small minority, their policy proposals are easily sidelined unless supported by male colleagues. This dynamic reinforces a cycle in which women's limited presence undermines their influence, discouraging future participation.

The findings indicate that low representation of women in Balinese politics does not stem from an absence of political awareness or interest exists in latent and fragmented forms that rarely develop into sustained political engagement. Interviews with activists, politicians, and community members reveal that many Balinese women possess an understanding of political processes and express concern about public issue, particularly those related to social welfare, education, health, and family well-being. However, this interest often remains informal and personalized, rather than institutionalized through party membership or candidacy.

Several informants noted that political engagement among women is frequently subordinated to daily responsibilities. Political interest competes with domestic obligations, ritual duties, and income-generating activities, leaving little space for consistent participation in political organizations. As a result, political interest among women rarely translates into political ambition. This gap between interest and ambition is critical in understanding why women remain underrepresented despite their active roles in community life.

Becoming a political representative requires more than political awareness; it requires access to political vehicles, resources, and legitimacy. In Bali, these requirements are deeply gendered. Political parties act as primary gatekeepers to representation, yet party structures remain male-dominated and rely heavily on informal networks that privilege men. Recruitment of female candidates is widely described as difficult, particularly for smaller or non-dominant parties, which often struggle to find women willing, or able to contest elections.

Women who do enter to political parties are frequently framed as quota candidates, a label that undermines their credibility from the outset. This framing affects not only party elites treat female candidates, but also how voters perceive them. Rather than being recognized as political actors with autonomous agendas, women are often viewed as symbolic fulfillments of legal requirements. Such perceptions reduce women's bargaining power within parties and weaken their electoral positioning.

Moreover, candidacy itself carries significant political costs. Campaigning requires financial capital, time, and extensive networking, all of which are unevenly distributed between men and women. Male candidates, who are more likely to control family resources and have broader social networks through adat and community leadership roles, enjoy structural advantages. Women, by contrast, must navigate political competition while simultaneously fulfilling expectations as wives, mothers, and ritual actors.

These gender barriers are reflected in electoral outcomes. Across multiple legislative periods, women have consistently occupied a minority of seats in the Bali Provincial Parliament (DPRD Provinsi Bali). Although political parties formally comply with the 30 percent quota requirement at the nomination stage, this compliance does not translate into proportional representation among elected legislators.

Table 1
Gender Composition of Bali Provincial Parliament (2009 – 2024)

Legislative Period	Total Seats	Male members	Female Members	Percentage Women (%)
2009 – 2014	55	51	4	7%
2014 – 2019	55	50	5	9%
2019 – 2024	55	47	8	14%
2024 - 2029	55	45	10	18%

Source: Author's compilation based on official election results published by the Indonesian General Election Commission

Table 1 shows a gradual increase in women's representation in the Bali Provincial Parliament between 2009 and 2024, although the overall proportion remains well below 30 percent quota. Women occupied only 4 out of 55 seats (7%) in the 2009 – 2014 period, increasing slightly to 5 seats (9%) in 2014 – 2019. A

more noticeable rise occurred in the 2019 – 2024 period, with 8 women elected (14%), followed by 10 women (18%) in the 2024 – 2029 legislature.

The gap between nomination and election highlights the limitations of quota-based approaches when not accompanied by broader institutional change. Women candidates are frequently placed in non-competitive electoral districts or assigned unfavorable positions on candidate lists. As a result, male candidates continue to dominate parliamentary seats across electoral cycles. This pattern demonstrates that descriptive representation in Bali remains structurally constrained, with women entering parliament only in limited numbers and often under disadvantageous conditions.

When compare internally, the dominance of male legislators reveals a persistent gender imbalance that has not significantly improved over time. This stagnation suggests that cultural and institutional factors continue to outweigh formal regulatory mechanisms design to promote gender equality.

Pattern observed at the provincial level are reinforced at the national level. Representation of women from Bali in the national legislature, both in the House of Representatives (DPR RI) and the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI), remains limited. In several legislative periods, female representatives from Bali constitute a small fraction of the province's delegation, often lower than national averages.

Table 2
*Gender Composition of Member of House of Representative from Bali
(2009 – 2024)*

Legislative Period	Total Seats	Male members	Female Members	Percentage Women (%)
2009 – 2014	9	9	0	0%
2014 – 2019	9	7	2	22%
2019 – 2024	9	9	0	0%
2024 - 2029	9	8	1	11%

Source: Author's compilation based on official election results published by the Indonesian General Election Commission

Table 2 demonstrates that women's representation among Members of the House of representatives (DPR RI) from Bali between 2009 to 2024 has remain extremely limited. Across four legislative periods, women almost entirely failed to

secure seats through electoral competition. No female candidates were elected in the 2009 – 2014 and 2019 – 2024 periods, while in the 2014 – 2019 period, the presence of two women did not result from electoral victory but from replacement mechanism following the resignation and legal prosecution of male legislators. Only in the 2024 – 2029 period did one woman successfully win a DPR RI seat through direct election, marking a rare exception rather than a structural shift.

Table 3
Gender Composition of Member of Regional Representation Council from Bali (2009 – 2024)

Legislative Period	Total Seats	Male members	Female Members	Percentage Women (%)
2009 – 2014	4	4	0	0%
2014 – 2019	4	4	0	0%
2019 – 2024	4	4	0	0%
2024 - 2029	4	3	1	25%

Source: Author's compilation based on official election results published by the Indonesian General Election Commission

Table 3 demonstrate a persistent pattern of gender exclusion in Bali's representation within the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) across four legislative periods from 2009 to 2024. For three consecutive terms, all four seats allocated to Bali were exclusively occupied by male representatives, resulting zero female representation. A modest shift appears only in the 2024 – 2029 period, when one woman secured a seat, increasing women's representation to 25 percent.

This consistency across political levels indicates that barriers to representation are not confined to local institutions but extend throughout the political system. While national politics may offer broader visibility and resources, access to these arenas remains mediated by the same gendered networks and party dynamics that constrain women at the provincial level. Consequently, Bali's political representation reflects a pattern of vertical exclusion, where women face obstacles at each stage of political advancement.

Beyond numerical representation, the findings raise critical questions about substantive representation. Women who succeed in entering legislative institutions often find themselves in a minority position, limiting their ability to influence decision making processes. Several female legislators emphasizes that

their voices are frequently marginalized, particularly when addressing issues perceived as “women’s concerns.”

In male dominated legislative environments, women must exert additional effort to be heard and taken seriously. This dynamic discourages active participation and reinforces a culture of silence. However, some women legislators have sought to counter this marginalization through collective action, such as participating in women’s parliamentary caucuses and advocacy networks. These initiatives aim to strengthen women’s bargaining power and promote gender responsive policies, although their impact remains constrained by limited numbers.

The persistence of low substantive representation underscores the inadequacy of viewing political inclusion solely through the lens of seat allocation. Without sufficient representation, women struggle to transform institutional norms or policy agendas in meaningful ways.

The key finding of this study is that political representation in Bali is closely tied to cultural legitimacy. Leadership is often associated with masculine authority, seniority, and lineage, attributes that favor men within both *adat* and party structures. Women candidates must therefore navigate a dual legitimacy gap: they must prove both political competence and cultural acceptability.

This legitimacy gap shapes voter behavior as well as internal party decisions. Even when voters express support for women candidates, entrenched beliefs about leadership can influence electoral outcomes. As a result, women’s representation is constrained not only by institutional mechanism but also by deeply internalized cultural norms regarding who is deemed fit to govern.

The findings from Bali highlight the limitation of gender quotas when implemented in context characterized by strong patriarchal culture. While quotas have increased the visibility of women in candidates lists, they have not substantially altered power relations within political institutions. This gap between formal inclusion and substantive impact raises important questions about the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in culturally embedded political systems.

Women’s political representation in Bali illustrates that democratic quality cannot be assessed solely through procedural compliance. Instead, meaningful representation requires attention to cultural norms, institutional practices, and resource distribution. Without addressing these underlying factors, gender quotas risk becoming symbolic measures that fail to challenge structural inequality.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this study demonstrates that women's political representation in Bali remains persistently limited not because women lack political interest, competence, or leadership potential, but because political institutions operate within a broader patriarchal context that systematically disadvantages women. Patriarchal norms embedded in Balinese social and cultural life shape perceptions of political legitimacy, define gender appropriate roles, and structure everyday expectations that constrain women's political participation. Within political parties, these norms are reproduced through male dominated recruitment networks, unequal access to campaign resources, and candidate selection practices that continue to favor men. As a result, formal commitments to gender equality, such as 30 percent quota for women candidates, have not translated into proportional or substantive representation in legislative institutions.

The findings further reveal that the persistence of gender inequality in political representation is the outcome of intersecting structural factors. Cultural norms influence women's ability to accumulate political capital, including social networks, financial resources, and organizational experience, which are crucial for electoral success. At the same time, electoral practices and party gatekeeping mechanisms amplify these disadvantages by privileging candidates who already possess established networks and economical capital resources that are more readily accessible to men. Together, these dynamics produce a durable gap between descriptive representation at the nomination stage and actual electoral outcomes, reinforcing women's marginal position in formal politics.

Beyond its empirical contributions, this study offers an important theoretical contribution to the literature on gender and political representation. First, by integrating patriarchy theory with the concept of political capital, this research demonstrates how patriarchal culture operates not only as symbolic norms but also a material structure that shapes access to political resources. Patriarchy in Bali functions as a system that regulates who can accumulate political capital and under what conditions, thereby influencing electoral competitiveness long before voting takes place. This finding extends existing theories of women's political representation by highlighting the cultural production of political capital as a key mechanism of exclusion.

Second, this study contributes to debates on gender quotas by showing that affirmative action policies cannot be fully understood in isolation from local socio-cultural contexts. In culturally embedded societies such as Bali, quotas risk becoming procedural instruments unless accompanied by efforts to labor, and

expand women's access to political capital. This insight underscores the importance of moving beyond institutionalist explanations and incorporating cultural and sociological perspectives into analysis of electoral reform.

Overall, this study argues that improving women's political representation in Bali requires more than regulatory compliance. It necessitates institutional transformation within political parties, sustained cultural negotiation within *adat* community structures, and long-term strategies to strengthen women's political capital. Only through such multidimensional change can political representation move beyond symbolic inclusion towards substantive gender equality in Balinese politics.

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