EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR HOUSEWIVES IN SERDANG BEDAGAI REGENCY

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

On a daily basis, women often find themselves in a disadvantaged position within the political sphere. Several factors contribute to this condition, one of which is the limited access to and mastery of political knowledge. This program is designed to empower women through political education that focuses on strengthening their understanding, capacity, and confidence to actively participate in decision-making processes. Women's political participation continues to face structural and cultural barriers, including restricted access to information, low self-confidence, and the persistent influence of patriarchy. To overcome these challenges, the program organizes interactive political education forums that encourage participants to understand their political rights, analyze social issues, and enhance political skills to become more empowered in voicing their aspirations. As a strategic effort, the program partners with the General Elections Commission (KPU) of Serdang Bedagai to ensure that the educational content is relevant to women's needs while also improving program effectiveness through expert involvement and broader access to information. Through gender-based political education, this program is expected to encourage women to participate more actively in democratic processes, strengthen their position in policymaking, and contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable society.

Keywords: Empowerment, Education, Women

1. INTRODUCTION

Civil society plays a strategic role in shaping the direction of social and political change, both through participation in policymaking processes and oversight of democratic governance (Lall, 2025; Rusfiana & Kurniasih, 2024). Therefore, a critical attitude, vigilance, and accuracy in managing the flow of political information are essential to ensure

that political decisions and engagements are oriented toward improving the quality of life of the community.

In this context, political education becomes a key element in enhancing the political awareness and capacity of citizens, particularly among groups that have historically faced structural barriers to political participation, such as women (Marsella et al., 2025; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). Women represent a strategic demographic in social and political dynamics, given their significant proportion within the population structure (Kitole & Sesabo, 2024; Lu, 2024). However, the level of women's political participation in Indonesia remains relatively low. According to World Bank data (2023), Indonesia ranks sixth in Southeast Asia in terms of women's representation in parliament. The limited presence of women in legislative bodies has implications for the insufficient attention given to gender equality issues in policymaking processes. As indicated by Robinson & Gottlieb, (2021), increasing women's political participation has the potential to promote policies that are more responsive to gender issues, which can ultimately generate broader positive impacts on social life.

According to Ginting et al., (2023), women's involvement in political processes generally remains weak and is often dependent on their husbands' preferences and other external factors. Yet, to create a shared living space that is more equitable, all perspectives must be accommodated on an equal footing. Women must take part not only as candidates and voters in political processes but also in efforts to strengthen their political understanding, skills, and gender perspectives.

To address the barriers affecting women's understanding and roles in politics, a forum is needed to identify and unpack the challenges they face. One approach is to provide systematically designed political education classes that facilitate discussions on issues related to politics and women. This program offers political education tailored to their current conditions and needs. Such political education for women is expected to help them develop, enrich, and deepen their understanding of political processes while emphasizing the importance of women's roles in advancing improvements in living conditions, as well as economic, social, and cultural life across various contexts (Ramadhanty et al., 2024; Wahyudi, 2018).

One region that faces persistent issues related to politics and women is Serdang Bedagai. The district still encounters challenges in this area, visibly reflected in the failure to meet the 30% quota for women's representation—only 4 women (8%) out of 45 members of the Serdang Bedagai Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) are women. However, according to Saragih, (2018), this issue signifies a more complex structural and cultural problem. Saragih's research identified information gaps within political institutions, low self-confidence, and the strong influence of patriarchal cultural norms as the primary obstacles hindering women's active political participation (Harahap, 2024).

Therefore, creating spaces that highlight political themes can help strengthen women's understanding of politics and encourage their participation in decision-making processes at both local and national levels (Tagoe & Abakah, 2015). As an empowerment effort, this space will be designed as a forum focused on political education for women, through

which it is expected to contribute to fostering more inclusive political participation and enhancing the overall quality of democracy. The political education program will function as an interactive space where participants can discuss and plan various strategies to address the political challenges they encounter (Donbavand & Hoskins, 2021; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). It will also provide opportunities for women to directly engage with experts and practitioners, discuss citizens' political rights, develop skills in identifying and analyzing social issues, assess political candidates' track records, and respond to critical questions that arise throughout the learning process (Kholil et al., 2024). Thus, the program not only offers theoretical knowledge but also equips participants with practical skills necessary for active engagement in politics and decision-making.

2. RESEARCH METHODE

This community engagement program was carried out at the Serdang Bedagai General Elections Commission (KPU) office by gathering housewives from the surrounding area. First, the service team conducted an in-depth study to identify issues commonly faced by women, particularly housewives. After the participants of the political education class were assembled, the team administered several tests aimed at identifying their political knowledge and confirming the problems they experience in their daily environment, based on the team's prior research. Subsequently, the series of community engagement activities was implemented through program socialization, lectures and discussions, and evaluation.

Program Socialization

The socialization activities included an explanation of the objectives and purpose of the university's visit and engagement with the participants—housewives attending the political education class (Furman et al., 2022; Martínez-Cousinou et al., 2021). The head of the community engagement team introduced the program titled Women's Empowerment Through Political Education for Housewives. This socialization phase aimed to provide participants with knowledge related to village potential management that could serve as a source of economic development for the community.

Problem-Based Learning Method

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a learning method that begins with presenting a concrete problem to guide learners toward conceptual understanding or problem resolution (Gürses et al., 2022). The purpose of this method is to assist participating housewives in recognizing issues that arise in their daily lives. At the initial stage, the instructor posed questions related to everyday conflicts commonly experienced by women. The instructor then provided reasoning and case studies to broaden participants' perspectives in understanding these concrete issues. This process is expected to encourage women to identify problems independently, without relying on external entities (such as community or religious leaders) whose influence may distort their understanding of the issues they face. Beyond problem identification skills, the options offered by the

instructor are also intended to equip participants with better decision-making capacities, enabling them to become more empowered in determining solutions to everyday challenges.

Evaluation

Evaluation occupies a crucial position in assessing the extent to which learners achieve the intended learning objectives (Alt et al., 2023; Mohan, 2023). Evaluation not only measures the ability to recall or understand concepts but also tests learners' capacities to compare, assess, justify, and make decisions based on specific criteria. Thus, evaluation functions as a mechanism to determine whether the learning process has successfully fostered the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Furthermore, within a learning framework oriented toward empowerment—such as political education for women or housewives—the evaluation stage enables educators to identify changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills after completing the series of activities. Evaluation also helps pinpoint areas that require improvement, ensuring that learning does not stop at basic knowledge acquisition but progresses toward reflective abilities and more mature decision-making.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Women's Empowerment through Political Education for Housewives program began with a socialization phase involving members of the Serdang Bedagai General Elections Commission (KPU), who act as key stakeholders with a strong interest in enhancing women's political literacy. At this stage, the community engagement team presented the program to KPU members and coordinated the technical aspects of its implementation for the target participants.

Following the program socialization, KPU members provided feedback in the form of suggestions and recommendations for preliminary actions that the community engagement team could undertake. They also elaborated on the existing issues and the urgency of implementing this program, particularly in strengthening women's political capacity.

The subsequent series of activities was conducted on a different day. The next stage was a discussion session, formally opened by the head of the community engagement team before being handed over to the two facilitators who served as instructors in the class. Figure: Head of the Community Engagement Team, Evi Novida Ginting Manik, delivering the opening remarks to commence the program.

Figure 1. Socialization of PKM activities

During this session, members of the Serdang Bedagai General Elections Commission (KPU) also delivered opening remarks and explained to the participants the urgency of the proposed program. The program is expected to broaden participants' perspectives regarding the importance of political knowledge for women, particularly in addressing concrete problems encountered in their daily environment.

The next activity took the form of a discussion session facilitated by the speakers, Ira Rizka Lubis and Fredrick Broven, using the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach. This method began with the collection of various issues raised by the participants (Barrett 2017), consisting of real cases experienced by women in their everyday lives. During this problem-identification stage, several issues emerged, including limited infrastructure, lack of transparency among village officials, and rising prices of basic necessities. These issues then became the basis for joint discussion, in which the speakers acted as facilitators to guide the direction of the conversation.

Throughout the discussion process, the facilitators encouraged the exchange of views and introduced several fundamental concepts relevant to the issues being addressed. Clarification was also provided to refine participants' understanding, enabling them to view the problems more clearly, objectively, and comprehensively. This approach allowed participants to develop a more critical analytical framework before formulating appropriate alternative solutions. In this way, the method strengthened the participants' analytical capacity while encouraging their active participation in the process of identifying solutions to the problems they face.

In the second discussion session, the facilitators summarized the issues previously raised and clarified them further to ensure they were understood more objectively. The facilitators then offered several options and recommendations that could assist participants in addressing the identified problems. One recommendation was for women to form groups and build networks that meet regularly once a week. Within these groups, participants would begin by mobilizing knowledge, using the foundational concepts

introduced earlier by the facilitators. After this initial stage of knowledge mobilization, the women were encouraged to "make their voices heard" through accessible channels likely to reach relevant stakeholders. In this context, the participants were invited to form a pressure group capable of urging stakeholders to take an active role in resolving issues affecting women in their communities.

Figure 2. Presenter Fredrick Broven Ekayanta facilitating the discussion

In this session, it was also emphasized that women experience distinctive problems, for which only women possess the specific sensitivity to fully understand. Therefore, the issues raised in this forum were not solely focused on addressing public or social problems, but also included domestic and internal matters. These problems were expected to be identified, understood, and resolved collectively by the women themselves, thereby creating a shared space that supports empowerment and solidarity among women in confronting challenges in both the domestic and social spheres.

Figure 3. Discussion session led by Ira Rizka as the presenter

The first and second discussion sessions were designed to be continuous, allowing participants to express their problems and perspectives, while the presenters sought to receive and clarify various points before jointly identifying the core issues in the second session. In this stage, the presenters provided several options and recommendations regarding possible courses of action. One of the key points emphasized in this empowerment class was the importance of clarifying many aspects related to politics and encouraging women to accumulate more political knowledge.

Figure 4. A member of the Serdang Bedagai Election Commission, Fuad Hasan Lubis, delivering his discussion material

From the sessions that had been designed, the presenters did not position themselves as heroes offering instant solutions. Rather, each problem could only be recognized and resolved by the community itself in this case, the women participants. The role carried out by the university through this community service program was limited to enriching women's political knowledge and providing a range of concepts, options, and new perspectives that could help them better identify their problems and consider possible solutions.

The discussion session concluded with a presentation delivered by a member of the Serdang Bedagai Election Commission, Fuad Hasan Lubis. In this session, Fuad summarized the issues that had been raised and emphasized the urgency of political knowledge within society. With adequate political understanding, women would be better equipped to address their social problems, including making informed decisions when selecting political leaders in the future. Accordingly, women in Serdang Bedagai can emerge as active subjects who no longer "wait," but instead take initiative in working toward solutions to the issues faced by women in their community.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of this program aims to strengthen the university's impact on the community, particularly women in Serdang Bedagai. This program is expected to narrow

the gap between the university and the public, enabling the university to better recognize the problems that exist in its surrounding environment, while women in particular and the community more broadly can gain a clearer understanding of the functions of the university as well as the kinds of support it can provide in addressing everyday societal challenges.

This community engagement activity has also generated positive outcomes for the village government and the management of the Suka Makmur Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). The program has encouraged both actors to become more attentive to the empowerment of the existing BUMDes in efforts to develop local tourism destinations in Suka Makmur Village. Through this initiative, a stronger understanding has been cultivated regarding the importance of empowering BUMDes to develop village potential particularly in the domain of tourism—as a means to stimulate the local economy.

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