

Gender Relations between Men and Women in Village Government Decision-Making



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ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine the dynamics of gender relations in decision-making in Pesagi village, Kayen sub-district, Pati district. The main focus of this research is to understand the extent to which women are involved in the decision-making process and how to improve the role of women in line with the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which provides new opportunities for women's participation.

This research uses a qualitative approach with the methods of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive picture of women's participation in village decision-making. By testing the validity of the data using the Triangulation technique, namely comparing and reviewing the degree of trust in information obtained through different times and tools in qualitative research.

The results show that despite formal recognition of women's role in village governance, their active participation is still limited. Women tend to be involved in domestic and community issues, such as health and social welfare, while men dominate areas of physical village development. Deep-rooted gender stereotypes and inequalities in access and opportunity are also factors inhibiting women's participation, and decision-making by women is often influenced by men.

Based on the explanation from the analysis of men's and women's gender relations in decision-making in Pesagi village, to increase women's participation in village decision-making, a comprehensive strategy is needed, including training and capacity building, setting quotas for women's representation, and active support from the female village head. So that women can contribute more significantly to village development and ensure gender-equitable policies.

KEYWORDS: Village, Gender, Decision, Women, Participation

A. INTRODUCTION

A village is a legal community unit with territorial boundaries that has the authority to regulate and manage government affairs, the interests of the local community based on community initiatives, origin rights, and/or traditional rights that are recognized and respected within the government system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Law No 6, 2014).

The village is run by the village government and also the Village Consultative Body. The village government consists of a village head who is assisted by village officials in organizing the village government and the interests of the community, where the village head has a function in accordance with Law No.06 of 2014 concerning Villages Article 26 paragraph 1 "The Village Head is in charge of organizing Village Government, implementing Village Development, fostering Village communities, and empowering Village communities".

When viewed from a sociological point of view, Indonesia has a social structure that tends to be patriarchal in its tribal or community culture, as expressed by (Sakina & Ade Irma, 2016) The patriarchal system that dominates people's culture causes gender inequality and injustice that affects various aspects of human activities. (Rokhmansyah, 2016). This actually results in the transfer of women's roles only as supporters of the existing system, where women are subordinated, which in the end in the democratic system of equality is only a formality. (Anita, 2017).

Women's involvement in decision-making is needed for the achievement of fair and equitable political participation and, for the creation of public policies that favor women, women's participation in politics must be supported in order to be able to implement their abilities in the political field, with the aim of prospering society in general. (Kollo, 2017). In the process of village development, women have made an important contribution by taking part in the management of the village economy where women are active in the process of economic empowerment by being active in empowerment activities, such as the large role of women in the social sphere, through various activities of women in village social institutions. This activity is carried out through various women's

Gender Relations between Men and Women in Village Government Decision-Making

empowerment activities where socially, women can bridge the implementation of various village development programs that are not reached by men.

But in other respects, women continue to play a secondary role. Where in participation in organizations women are assigned more often assigned to administrative divisions rather than strategic ones in the process of deliberation and decision-making women tend to be passive (Alfirdaus et al., 2017). The involvement of women in the public sphere in the decision-making process is still not optimal, the involvement of women in village government in decision-making is still limited due to various factors, such as the patriarchal culture that is still dominant and the double burden that women suffer, in addition to the subordination received by women where men are considered more dominant and understand political issues, women have previously always been placed in the private or domestic sphere, which is associated with reproduction and childcare, and in all community activities by having an inferior position as expressed by (Tyagi Nidhi, 2021) *"There is a need to change the fatalistic cultural approach which somewhere still believes that women must not be given equal representation in jobs as their main task is confined to the kitchen instead of bread winners"*.

Women are considered incapable of becoming the main actors in the policy-making process, where women's participation in rural politics is only considered a formality and when women become government leaders, especially in villages, women will still be controlled by male families where "men are conceptualized to take care of public affairs and women domestic affairs" (Fujiati, 2014).

Historically, men have dominated public life, as well as exercising power to restrict and subordinate women in the private sphere (Obor, 2007). Although women play an important role in the survival of families and communities and contribute to development, they have been excluded from political life and decision-making processes.

This domination relationship provides an overview of gender relations where it is said that, gender relations are gender relations that have been defined and imperfectly controlled by one of its interrelated aspects, namely men (Flax, 1987). Where decision-making has tried to increase women's participation in decision-making by increasing the presence of women, where the presence of women in decision-making has been considered a form of fair and inclusive gender relations, it turns out that there are still gaps in decision-making received by women. Most of the government's economic policies are formulated and implemented in ways that appear to be gender-neutral, but on closer examination are marked by male bias (Elson, 1993). This biased and unstable relationship makes gender relations dominated by one party where one party can regulate and dominate the other party, in this case men as the governing party and women as the party who must obey like a hierarchical order in the organization where the number of women is more at the bottom and the number of men is less at the top (Acker, 1988) This order preserves traditional power relations between women and men and affirms the symbolic relationship between masculinity and leadership and femininity and support (Acker, 1988). Women are defined as a "question" or "sex" or "other" and men as a universal, men tend to be seen as free from or not defined by gender relations (Flax, 1987).

In family relationships, women have a more complicated role, as they are responsible for raising children as well as cooking, which makes them more demanding than men. Women work in the field as much as men, and still have to take care of domestic chores and child care (Santasombat, 2008). With such complex roles, women are also not considered to have a better position, in some cultures men are considered to have higher moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities than women (Santasombat, 2008). Therefore, no matter how talented a woman is in commerce, politics, finance, education, she will always be considered to have lower potential than men.

To date, the involvement of women as the main actors in village governance is still low; out of 401 villages in Kabupaten Pati, only 33 women have become village heads. This percentage is still far below the ideal threshold of 30% with only 8.2%. Although the number of female village heads in Kabupaten Pati is still very small compared to men. However, the existence of elected female village heads is a breath of fresh air to realize equality in the political process and decision-making in favor of women, one of which is Pesagi Village, Kayen Sub-district, Pati Regency.

In addition to the female village head, Pesagi Village has members of the Village Consultative Body where Pesagi Village has nine BPD members with a composition of seven men and two women, the presence of women in the village government, especially those who become village heads and village consultative bodies, shows the development of women's participation in village politics, this is certainly a driver of women's participation in decision making even though Pesagi Village has no more members than men, with the representation of women in the BPD body is expected to have a good influence on the development of a gender-equitable democratic process.

With the presence of women in the village governing body, the opportunity to take part in the public policy-making process becomes greater, women who were initially only considered as second humans under men and only placed in the domestic sphere, at this time, women can also become mainstream determinants in the political process, through the Village Consultative Body and even become Village Heads.

As stated by (Rismawati, 2012) "Keep in mind that the more women who actively participate in the development process, the easier it will be for women's interests and needs to be realized, because those who know the interests and needs of women are the women themselves", this makes women have an important role in the village political process that is free and not bound and pressured by any party. Research Methods

Gender Relations between Men and Women in Village Government Decision-Making

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this research is a case study type qualitative research method, which is one way of qualitative research that can cover certain units, provide an in-depth description, and can use multiple sources of information. This type of research uses descriptive research which is useful for finding the broadest possible knowledge data on the object of research by investigating in depth the human activities that exist at that location. This type is used because it can describe systematically and know the external variables regarding the gender relations of men and women in the Village Government in decision making.

Research Site

The researcher took the area in Pesagi Village, Kayen Subdistrict, Pati Regency, where the study will be carried out in natural conditions, in the sense that the researcher does not manipulate the research data. The research was conducted in Pesagi Village because there is an elected female village head and there are regulations regarding the participation of female BPD members.

Research Subject

In this study, the informant selection technique will be carried out using purposive sampling technique (data source sampling technique with certain considerations) (Sugiyono, 2016). Where one sees sampling as a series of strategic choices about who, where, and how one conducts research based on the suitability of research questions, analytical frameworks, and explanations to be developed in research. "There is no one best sampling strategy because which is best will depend on the context in which researchers are working and the nature of their research objectives" (Palys, 2008). In this study, the main subjects that will be taken as the main source are the Village Government, Village Consultative Body, and Community Leaders in Pesagi Village, Kayen District, Pati Regency.

Data Type and Source

The data in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained from sources that are directly researched. Primary data sources are obtained by going directly to the field to get concrete sources. In this study, primary data is obtained from direct observation and in-depth interviews with sources to obtain in-depth explanations such as being directly involved or by chatting with sources to obtain the data needed. Secondary data, is data obtained through second sources or indirectly, in the form of reports, mass media, and other literacy studies related to the problem under study.

Data Collection techniques

The data collection techniques in this research are in-depth interviews, documentation, and non-partisan observation. In-depth interviews are the process of obtaining information for research purposes by means of question and answer *face to face interviews of* interviewers with respondents or interviewees, with or without using guidelines (Sutopo, 2006). Documentation is data collection in the form of documents relevant to the problem under study through written documents. Documents needed in this research are village documents, mass media, books, journals and others, to find out village data related to village finances, village development plans, village reports, and village profiles. Documentation is a complement to the use of observation and interview methods (Sugiyono, 2016). Non-partisan observation, this method is carried out by observing that someone who makes observations does not take part in the life of the object being observed (Sutrisno Hadi, 2000) Non-partisan observation, this method is carried out by conducting observations, namely a person who makes observations does not take part in the life of the object being observed (Sutrisno Hadi, 2000).

Validity Checking Technique

The methods obtained to obtain data validity are triangulation of data sources, the use of membership checks from participants who provide truthful information, conducting discussions with readers of research results, clarifying bias honestly to readers if any, and spending more time in the field to understand more deeply the symptoms being studied.

In this study researchers used triangulation with sources. According to *Patton*, source triangulation "means comparing and reviewing the degree of trust in information obtained through different times and tools in qualitative research" (Moloeng, 2018). And varied answers will be obtained from various data sources such as documents, archives, interview results, or also interviewing more than one subject at different times and are considered to have different points of view.

Analysis

The approach in data analysis techniques used in research according to (Creswell, 2016) this is:

1. Processing data and interpreting data for analysis. This step involves sorting and organizing the data into different types depending on the source of the information.
2. Reading through the data. At this stage, reducing the overview and keeping and preserving important statements or notes to be retained.
3. Analyze in more detail by coding the data. Organizing categorized units of data in coding.
4. Apply the coding process to describe the settings, people, categories, and themes to be analyzed.
5. Indicates how these descriptions and themes will be restated in a qualitative narrative or report

Gender Relations between Men and Women in Village Government Decision-Making

6. Interpreting or making sense of data

After carrying out these stages, the final step is drawing conclusions or interpreting the data which will provide explanations and conclusions to the research problems studied in this study.

C. DISCUSSION AND RESULT

Women's participation in decision-making is a key focus in efforts to create gender-inclusive political and governance systems at the village level. Women's participation can work well in decision-making when they are recognized in the process, both formally and non-formally.

Women's involvement in village decision-making and development is key to ensuring that the needs and aspirations of all community members are fairly accommodated. Women's active role in various aspects of village life not only enriches the decision-making process, but also brings significant positive changes in the village community environment. Therefore, women's ability to develop ideas and express their opinions in village meetings is an important aspect of rural political participation. In village meetings and deliberations, women play an important role by developing ideas that are able to influence decisions taken in village meetings and deliberations.

Women's position in village decision-making

In decision-making in Pesagi village, women have been given recognition by the presence of women who are included in village government institutions where Pesagi village has 3 women out of 16 village officials, as well as 2 women out of 9 BPD members, besides that with the election of women as village heads in Pesagi village, making recognition of women's participation is increasing, where this is able to change the stereotype that only men can become leaders which certainly opens the perspective of the importance of women's roles and contributions in decision-making. In Pesagi Village, the deliberation process always involves women, where they have given formal invitations to women by always involving women in meetings and deliberations at the village level, where women who are included in village government institutions are always given invitations to village meetings. This can be seen from the number of attendance lists of each village in the village development deliberation where the presence of women in Pesagi Village was attended by 20 women out of 49 participants, where they were divided into PKK, village midwives, BPD, village officials, and other women leaders.

The high attendance of women in the Pesagi's Musrenbangdes was due to the time chosen for the deliberation, which was in the morning on Friday, where women with children could attend because their children were still in school, and Friday was chosen because the meeting was ensured to be completed before the Friday prayer time because all villagers are Muslim, which made the women able to attend and the meeting was not delayed due to the limited time available.

The high attendance of women in the musrenbangdes is due to the efforts made by the village government to continue to increase women's participation in decision-making by increasing the quota of female invitations, which is expected that the presence of women can provide suggestions that can represent the entire village community.

Women's involvement in village decision-making and development

In the process of decision-making and expressing opinions in Pesagi Village, women are still less active in submitting their suggestions, out of a total of nine suggestions, there was only one suggestion submitted by women in the village deliberation. The low participation of women in expressing opinions in village meetings is due to several factors, such as women who still feel embarrassed to express their opinions, confusion in expressing their opinions, which in the end choose to remain silent and listen to meetings or deliberations that occur. Another factor is that men are considered to have a better understanding of village issues, especially regarding development issues.

The low participation of women in expressing their opinions is exacerbated by the fact that women do not get equal positions in certain fields, where the community leaders invited are mostly men. Meanwhile, the majority of the women invited came from the same institution, namely the PKK, which made their voices considered as a unity within the same institution.

Women's involvement in decision-making in Pesagi village is often limited to domestic and community issues. Such as suggestions on the provision of clean water during the dry season, as well as increasing the budget for improving the nutrition of children and the elderly. While in village development in the form of physical development and village strategic development planning, men are considered more feasible and capable of performing these functions, where in the planning and decision-making process women in Pesagi often play a passive role in providing advice on village development.

This stereotype has limited women's involvement in decision-making to certain areas, which makes men have more dominant power than women in the decision-making process. In village meetings, in expressing their opinions, women in Pesagi village often first convey their suggestions to men, which will later be conveyed by the men in the village meeting, such as about environmental cleanliness suggested by female midwives, finally the suggestion was conveyed by men in the village meeting. As in the BPD institution, women members are not given the authority to express opinions or make decisions, because the village government and other BPD members consider all suggestions made by the BPD chairman to have represented all input from the BPD, including women.

Gender Relations between Men and Women in Village Government Decision-Making

This has an impact on the priority of the village development budget, where in Village Regulation No. 5 of 2022 concerning the APBDes of Pesagi Village in 2023, there are several divisions of budget expenditures, especially physical development which reaches more than 50% of the total budget, while for PKK and Posyandu only 36,780,000 is given for posyandu and only 7,800,000 for PKK from a total budget of 3,197,231,000 or no more than 1.5% of the total budget received.

Relationship between men and women in decision-making

In decision-making by women in village meetings and deliberations, men have considerable influence in decision-making. Women's suggestions and opinions are often focused on certain areas that deal with "domestic" matters such as health and social welfare. Meanwhile, in decision-making related to physical development and strategic plans, women are still passive in giving their opinions.

The dominance of men in decision-making can be seen in several institutions, such as the Head of BPD Pesagi who stated that in the field of development, men are more dominant while women are more active in the PKK and health sectors. This certainly provides an illustration of traditional gender values where women are contracted to occupy domestic issues, and community empowerment through the health and household sectors, while men are seen as knowing village development. This means that in decision-making related to village development and other strategic decisions, men have a dominant influence.

Men's influence over women in decision-making in Pesagi village is generally positive, with men valuing women's suggestions despite their different areas of influence. As stated by the head of the Pesagi BPD and several community leaders, women's suggestions are considered in deliberations, although they are mostly related to the social and health sectors.

Although in some cases men have a positive influence by supporting and accepting women's opinions in decision-making, in the decision-making process, women rarely lead meetings except in PKK activities. Where in village meetings or deliberations women never act as leaders, women become meeting leaders only during PKK meetings where all participants are women.

In addition, while women's voices are heard, final decisions are often influenced more by male voices, which can result in a lack of women's perspectives in planning and implementing development projects that may be more inclusive and considerate of the needs of the whole community.

In the decision-making process carried out by the pesagi village head, it is also influenced by men, such as the influence of her husband, where the husband of the pesagi village head has an active role in providing useful input for the pesagi village head. This shows positive and constructive support from the husband for his wife's leadership and public responsibility.

In addition to the influence of her husband, Mrs. Sri Handayani as the village head of Pesagi also received influence from male village officials, especially the village secretary, who has a higher level of education, which makes administrative matters and formal activities, mostly represented by the village secretary as an extension of the village head.

Although communication between men and women is well-established and without significant gaps in village meetings and deliberation forums, women often express their opinions through men. This shows that although there is formal equality, in practice there is still a dependency of women on men in expressing their aspirations. Although men provide positive influence and support in decision-making, it still shows that women need approval or influence from men to move forward with their ideas. This suggests male dominance, which although considered positive, still limits women's autonomy.

Gender relations between men and women in decision-making in Pesagi Village

Pesagi village, with a female village head, offers a unique context for understanding the dynamics of gender relations in decision-making. Women's leadership as village heads in Pesagi shows progress in the development of gender equality and women's empowerment where in rural culture, leaders are always identified with men and women only occupy administrative positions or only as alternative leaders.

However, although Pesagi Village has a female village head, women's participation in policy-making is still not maximized. Many women focus more on PKK issues and leave village development matters to men who are considered to have a better understanding of the issues.

Women's leadership as village heads in Pesagi shows progress in gender equality where out of 401 villages in Kabupaten Pati, only 33 villages have female village heads. This certainly sets a positive example and proves that women can hold high leadership positions. However, this leadership has not yet fully translated into women's wider participation in all aspects of policy-making in Pesagi village.

Women in Pesagi tend to be passive in expressing opinions in village meetings, where they are more active in PKK activities, which focus on family welfare, health, education, and the environment. While this focus is equally important, it limits women's involvement in broader issues such as infrastructure development, the economy, and other strategic public policies.

Where issues related to village development, such as infrastructure planning and resource management, are often perceived as the domain of men. This is based on the stereotype that men are more understanding and competent in handling technical and strategic issues. These entrenched gender stereotypes ultimately limit women's participation in broad decision-making. Women feel less confident in expressing their opinions, which in turn makes them passive in giving suggestions.

Gender Relations between Men and Women in Village Government Decision-Making

In the process of implementing and supervising village development, women only receive information related to development progress, which in supervising and implementing development is left to men, such as in the construction of roads, village gates, and irrigation.

The dominance of men in the decision-making process in pesagi has resulted in women feeling more comfortable and safe expressing their opinions through men, which has limited women's involvement in decision-making in village development.

The lack of women's direct participation in decision-making results in a lack of diverse perspectives, which causes uneven village development and is unable to meet the needs of the entire community, where village development is dominated by infrastructure and physical issues, without seeing the perspective of community empowerment.

D. CONCLUSION

Although women have gained recognition and formal roles in village governance, their participation in decision-making remains limited. There are 3 women out of 16 village officials, 2 women out of 9 BPD members, and a female village head. In village meetings, women in Pesagi are still passive in providing their suggestions and opinions in village meetings. In terms of quantity, women are often present and invited, but their presence is not accompanied by the quality in providing input in village meetings. Many women in Pesagi village feel embarrassed or confused to express their opinions, this is because there is a stereotype that men understand village issues better, especially those related to development. This leads to women only being involved in domestic household issues, such as health and social welfare. In addition, there is an assumption that women's voices are already represented by the PKK, which limits their ability to express their opinions.

The relationship between men and women in decision-making shows that men are still dominant, especially when it comes to the physical development of the village. Although women's voices are heard, the final decision is often more influenced by men's voices, suggesting that women need approval or influence from men to move forward with their ideas. This further confirms male dominance, which although considered positive, still limits women's autonomy.

Women in Pesagi tend to be passive in expressing their opinions in village meetings, although Pesagi village has a female village head, women's participation in policy-making is still not maximized. Many women focus more on domestic issues and PKK by leaving village development matters to men. Issues related to village development, such as infrastructure planning and resource management, are often perceived as the domain of men, which ultimately limits women's participation in broad decision-making. The dominance of men in the decision-making process in pesagi has resulted in women feeling more comfortable and safe expressing their opinions through men, resulting in women's involvement in decision-making in village development being limited.

Overall, despite progress in the recognition and involvement of women, there are still challenges in achieving women's wider and equal participation in all aspects of policy-making in Pesagi village.

Overall, despite progress in the recognition and involvement of women, there are still challenges in achieving women's wider and equal participation in all aspects of policy-making in Pesagi village.

Based on the explanation of the analysis of gender relations between men and women in decision-making in Pesagi Village, several things can be done by the Pesagi Village Government in increasing women's involvement in decision-making by maximizing women's participation in village meetings and deliberations, especially in the process of decision-making and development that prioritizes community empowerment, where in decision-making and submitting ideas, women are given equal access to participation in village meetings and deliberations, as well as in monitoring the physical development of the village.

It is necessary to strengthen the application of the quota of women's representation in every village meeting and deliberation, and ensure that the representation quota is not only a formality but is truly effective and maximally implemented. It is expected that women's opportunities in village decision-making will increase significantly, so that they can contribute more to village development.

To ensure equal participation of women and men in village decision-making, a real approach to gender equality is needed that emphasizes the importance of women's contribution in all aspects of village policy-making, from receiving aspirations, planning, decisions, monitoring, to evaluation in village development, including infrastructure development.

With a female village head in Pesagi village, it is important to showcase the success of the village head as a motivation for other women to be actively involved in village policy. By organizing training and development programs for women, to strengthen their knowledge on development planning, public speaking, as well as on village administration.

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Gender Relations between Men and Women in Village Government Decision-Making

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