# Women's Participation in Parliament Comparison Between Indonesia and Singapore in themConcept Of SDG 5 (Gender Equality AndWomen's Empowerment)

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#### **Abstract**

The pervasive gender-based discrimination is a fundamental cause of the insufficient representation of women in politics, particularly within parliaments. This discrimination undermines women's confidence and erodes public trust in their capabilities. Nevertheless, policies addressing women's rights require the active involvement of women. Recognizing this issue, the government is endeavouring to enhance women's participation in parliaments through various initiatives. Additionally, the United Nations, through its global agenda—the Sustainable Development Goals—has included gender equality as a key objective to address this issue. This study will compare the governmental measures taken by two Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia and Singapore, to improve the quality of women's participation in their respective parliaments. The analysis will employ feminism theory, political participation theory, and women's political participation theory. With a qualitative-comparative method to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current status of women in parliament, interviews will be conducted with parliament members, representatives from The Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, and feminist activists. Results from comparing both countries are acquired as it will be seen that governmental actions solely, do not guarantee the quality of women's participation in parliaments. Further actions are required in order to obtain significant progress.

Key words: Gender based discrimination, feminism, women participation in parliament, SDG.

#### 1. Introduction

Growing up as a woman brings an inevitable awakening to the realities of gender-based discrimination. It's a gradual, often painful recognition that society treats you differently—less fairly—simply because of your gender. This realization fuels a deeper understanding of the need for change and equality. Objectifying—even sexualizing women is still normalized, especially in mainstream media. According to "The F-Word: Do We Still Need Feminism in 2016," a journal written by Brittany Anderson, it states that women's exploitation still often occurs in mainstream media (1). Women are often seen as objects, which results in society's invention of a certain belief towards female beauty or the so-called "beauty standards," thus fostering a cycle of self-comparison among women. The writer strongly believes that women possess significant potential beyond being considered objects. Especially in the political realm, it is imperative to acknowledge women's capabilities to encourage more women's participation in the parliaments.

Active participation of women in parliamentary roles is essential for the development of policy formulation as well as the cultivation of a fair governance system where diverse perspectives are considered and the possibilities of discrimination are reduced. It is unfortunate that despite rapid world development, women are still very likely to be discriminated against to this day, particularly in politics.

Through the "Partisipasi Perempuan dalam Politik: Studi Anggota Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Kota Malang 2019-2024" article, it is stated that women in politics serve an equally important role and should not be considered merely as a "secondary actor." According to Keohane, discrimination against women has become normalized in the field of international relations, where women are often excluded from discussions involving power and autonomy (2). Ann Tickner, a feminist international relations theorist, on the other hand, mentioned that "International politics is a man's world," which was proven by the underrepresentation of women in shaping foreign policy as well as other top-level government positions (3).

To tackle this issue, global political stakeholders have taken action. The United Nations (UN), for instance, held World Conferences on Women in Beijing in 1995, focusing on the role and equal rights of women as the core efforts to uphold peace, democracy, and economic stability (4). This conference marked a significant turning point for gender equality in the global sphere as it established strategic objectives as well as actions to promote the advancement of women and achieve gender equality across 12 key areas of concern, such as women and poverty, women and health, education, and training of women, women, and armed conflict, violence against women, women and the economy, institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, women in power and decision-making, human rights of women, women and the environment, women and the media, and the girl-child (5). This initiative demonstrates the UN's commitment to advancing efforts toward achieving gender equality, since years ago.

However, a more comprehensive analysis shows that significant areas of gender-based discrimination persist. This is evident through the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) data, which states that only seven out of 180 county members of the IPU achieved a 50% female representation in parliament. Those countries include Rwanda (63,8%), Cuba (55,7%), Nicaragua (53,9%), Andorra (50,0%), Mexico (50,0%), Namibia (50,0%), and United Arab Emirates (50,0%) (6).

Table 1.1 IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliaments – September 1st 2024

Rank	Country	Lower or Single House			
		Election Date	Seats	Women	%
1	Rwanda	07/2024	80	51	63,8%
2	Cuba	03/2023	470	262	55,7%
3	Nicaragua	11/2021	91	49	53,9%
4	Andorra	04/2023	28	14	50,0%
5	Mexico	06/2024	500	250	50,0%
6	Namibia	11/2019	104	52	50,0%
7	United Arab Emirates	10/2023	40	20	50,0%

Source: https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date\_month=9&date\_year=2024

Rwanda, which reached 63,8% female representation, has held the top position globally for over 15 years (4). The Annual Review of Political Science journal attributes this success to the implementation of a minimum quota for women in the legislature (7). Since the 2003 genocide, Rwanda has enforced gender quotas in its parliament, which has led to its leadership in women's representation in legislative seats (8). In the first decade following the introduction of the quota, Rwanda increased women's parliamentary representation from 48.80% to 63.80% (Walsh, 2020: 28).

Gender quotas play a crucial role in advancing women's representation in politics. These policies set thresholds, usually as a percentage, for the number of women who must be elected or nominated to political decision-making bodies. The quotas ensure that a minimum percentage of legislative candidates or seats are filled by women (7). Another example of a successful implementation of gender quotas is Indonesia. The country introduced quotas to increase female representation in parliament through Article 65 of Law Number 12 of 2003, which mandates that "Every political party participating in the election can nominate candidates for DPR, Provincial DPRD, and Regency/City DPRD in each electoral district, with a minimum of 30% female representation" (9). This policy has helped increase women's participation in politics, with female representation rising from 21% in the previous period to 22% for the 2019–2024 legislative term (10).

As a democratic nation, Indonesia has demonstrated a strong commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination. This is exemplified by its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1984, solidified through the enactment of Law No. 7 of 1984 as the official legal framework (11). The Indonesian government has long prioritized the issue of gender discrimination, as evidenced by its ratification of several other key international conventions. These include the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women for Work of Equal Value (Law No. 80/1957), the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (Law No. 68/1958), ILO Convention No. 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (Law No. 21/1999), as well as participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the International Conference on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1994), and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (signed February 28, 2000) (12). Since the administration of President Abdurahman Wahid, the Indonesian government has increasingly recognized the importance of gender equality as a critical national objective. This commitment is reflected in the issuance of Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming (13). Gender mainstreaming is treated as a priority initiative aimed at ensuring that all stages of national development—planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation—are carried out from a gender-sensitive perspective. The goal is to achieve gender equality and justice across all facets of society, including within the family, the community, and at the national and state levels (Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development) (13).

Another country that demonstrates a strong commitment to upholding women's rights and advancing gender equality is Singapore. This is evidenced by the 29.13% participation of women in politics as of 2022 (14). This achievement has not come swiftly; Singapore has undergone significant systemic changes to enhance women's representation in its parliament. Notably, from 1970 to 1984, the Singapore Parliament was entirely male-dominated (15). Unlike many other nations, Singapore has traditionally not adopted gender quota policies, which have proven beneficial in enhancing female representation elsewhere. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP), characterized by conservative ideologies that often emphasize patriarchal values, has historically influenced the political landscape, leading to a reluctance to prioritize gender quotas. However, a pivotal shift occurred in 2009 when the PAP announced a target of 30% female representation in parliament, marking a significant turning point for women's political engagement in Singapore. This announcement was more than symbolic; it catalyzed a notable increase in women's political representation, rising to 20% between 2006 and 2011 (16). In addition to these policy developments, Singapore has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women (CEDAW) as of October 5, 1995, further solidifying its commitment to promoting and protecting women's rights (17).

The preceding discussion highlights Indonesia and Singapore as notable examples of countries outside the seven referenced in the global data on national parliaments, as reported by IPU Parline, that are actively working to enhance women's representation in their legislative bodies. These efforts underscore the persistent global inadequacy in women's representation in politics. The author posits that such representation is critical, as it provides a platform for women to advocate for their rights. This assertion is supported by findings from Karen Beckwith, a political scientist, who, in her 2014 work "Plotting the Path from One to the Other," emphasizes the necessity of policies that address women's interests, such as those aimed at eliminating gender-based violence, thereby promoting women's autonomy and safety (7). Conversely, the absence of women in political representation can yield detrimental effects on women's well-being, particularly given their roles as mothers (7). The author asserts that the urgency of addressing this issue is a global concern that necessitates a collaborative approach among all stakeholders. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must align their visions and missions to formulate policies that enhance women's representation in politics and eradicate discrimination against women in its entirety. In this context, the United Nations has introduced a global agenda through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Launched in 2015, this initiative represents a new development framework grounded in universal, inclusive, and integrated principles aimed at fostering sustainable progress across various dimensions, including human rights and equality, with a target for achievement by 2030 (18).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a significant initiative of the United Nations, building upon the framework established by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (19). The SDGs encompass 17 goals supported by 167 targets, measured through 241 indicators (18). These goals address a comprehensive array of issues, including poverty eradication, health, and well-being, food security, gender equality, quality education, access to clean energy and water, economic growth, decent work, innovation in industry and infrastructure, sustainable urban development, inequality, sustainable consumption and production patterns, marine ecosystems, climate change mitigation, terrestrial ecosystem conservation, peace, and collaborative partnerships for the achievement of these objectives (20).

Among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the author is particularly drawn to the goal of gender equality. The inclusion of gender equality in both frameworks highlights the ongoing challenges in addressing this issue. The United Nations has reported that no indicator associated with SDG 5 (Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment) has yet met its target, indicating significant obstacles to achieving all gender equality indicators by 2030. Areas such as access to health, education, economic opportunities, and women's political participation continue to exhibit pronounced gender discrimination (21). To address these challenges, the United Nations has established various targets and indicators to provide data and policy guidance, facilitating the measurement of progress towards the SDGs (18). Specifically, SDG 5 encompasses nine targets aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030 (20). This paper will concentrate on Target 5.5: "Ensure Women's Full and Effective Participation and Equal Opportunity to Lead at All Levels of Decision-Making in Political, Economic, and Public Life," with a particular focus on Indicator 5.5.1: "Proportion of Seats Held by Women in (A) National Parliaments and (B) Local Governments." To examine

the progress toward these targets and indicators, this paper will compare women's political participation in Indonesia and Singapore. This comparative analysis is warranted by the absence of prior research that comprehensively addresses women's representation in politics within both countries, evaluates their differences, and employs SDG targets and indicators as the primary framework for analysis.

# 1.1 Existing Literature

Research on women's participation in parliament is crucial, as highlighted in several studies. Amanda Clayton's article in the "Annual Review of Political Science" explores the positive effects of gender on women's parliamentary roles and resulting policies through feminist institutionalism. Another study, by Ham Sasono Yakfi and colleagues, focuses on women's political involvement in Malang City, identifying barriers such as limited expression opportunities and broader gender issues, though it lacks comparative analysis with other legislative bodies. Suryadi's research examines how gender relations impact Indonesian women's political participation, emphasizing the need for government action against gender-based discrimination, but it faces methodological shortcomings.

While these studies have strengths, they share a common gap in the comparative analysis of women's representation in Indonesia and Singapore. This paper aims to fill that gap by grounding its research in SDG 5, which promotes gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly target 5.5 regarding women's participation in decision-making. The author will employ feminist theory and qualitative-comparative methods to analyze women's representation in both countries and its influence on advancing women's rights.

#### 1.2 Theoretical framework

#### Feminism theory

In the political context, feminism serves as a multifaceted ideology employed by the women's movement to promote gender equality and combat sexist theories and practices that contribute to the social oppression of women (22). According to the same source, feminism provides a framework for observing, interpreting, and analyzing the socially constructed nature of gender inequality, which is perpetuated from large institutional structures to the nuances of daily life in society. Within the realm of international relations, feminism pursues two primary objectives: to create space for gender considerations and to advance collaborative studies that transcend traditional gender concepts (23). Feminists assert that gender dynamics have always been present in international relations but have often been overlooked due to male-centered perspectives (23). The absence of representation for women has prompted feminists to emphasize that both women and men are essential actors in global phenomena. Feminism seeks to introduce a new paradigm in international relations by emphasizing the need to monitor decision-making processes, assess women's roles, and recognize their contributions within this field. This article will explore how feminist theory highlights the marginalization of women within predominantly male-centered perspectives, which limits their contributions in both theoretical and practical domains. By examining the conditions in various countries, this study will evaluate the actions taken by governments to enhance women's visibility and participation. Furthermore, it will analyze how gender logic serves as a foundational principle for organizational structures in this context.

#### **Political Participation and Awareness**

In the journal "Political Participation and Three Theories of Democracies," Jan Teorell defines political participation as the process by which individuals seek to influence government

decisions, including the selection of government representatives and the policies enacted (24). Similarly, Miriam Budiarjo, in her book "Dasar-dasar Ilmu Politik," describes political participation as the activities undertaken by individuals or groups to engage in politics, such as voting for state leaders, which can directly or indirectly impact public policy (25). A key factor that enhances political participation is political awareness, which Budiardjo notes is foundational for encouraging active engagement in the political process (25). Individual influence on political decisions often stems from various forms of engagement, including campaigning, voting, and demonstrations (26). This relationship highlights that higher levels of political awareness correlate with a greater willingness to participate in activities that can shape political outcomes. Moreover, W. Page Rahman, in "Building Public Political Awareness and Participation," emphasizes that increased political awareness leads to heightened political participation, whereas low political awareness results in diminished engagement (26). This underscores the interdependence between political awareness and participation, suggesting that their synergy is vital for maintaining the political dynamics of a country. The author concludes that fostering both political awareness and participation is essential for a thriving democratic environment.

# **Women's Political Participation**

Women's political participation refers specifically to the engagement of women in the political sphere (27). It encompasses women's access to political roles and parliamentary positions, enabling them to incorporate gender-specific needs into essential public policies (28). This concept arises from the prevailing patriarchal structures within society, which have historically constrained women's political engagement (28). The low levels of women's political participation are influenced by societal stigmas surrounding male superiority and female inferiority, which foster a belief—shared by both men and women—that women are inherently marginalized in the political arena (29). This issue is particularly critical, as gender equality, including women's representation in politics, is vital for establishing a functioning democracy (28). Furthermore, the extent of women's participation is often directly related to their awareness of their own rights and potential to advocate for their interests (30). Despite governmental efforts to enhance political engagement, significant barriers persist, affecting women's participation both externally and internally (28). Externally, deeply entrenched patriarchal beliefs present the most significant challenges to women's political involvement (29). Internally, obstacles manifest in the form of women's political interest, ability, and awareness (28). At the core of the theory of women's political participation is the principle of providing equal access for women to engage politically—whether through voting, participating in political parties, or securing parliamentary positions without facing discrimination (28). Women's self-confidence is crucial in fostering political participation, alongside external factors such as support from political parties and public trust, which must be prioritized to increase women's political representation (28).

This paper adopts feminist theory as a foundational framework to examine the marginalization of women's interests within a predominantly male-centric paradigm, which has historically limited women's contributions in both theoretical and practical domains. The author will further explore how gender dynamics serve as a critical organizational underpinning. In addition to feminist theory, this analysis incorporates political participation theory and women's political participation theory. The focus will be on understanding how political awareness influences the varying levels of political engagement within a country. This discussion will be expanded through the lens of women's political participation theory, emphasizing the necessity for equal access for women to engage politically—whether through voting in general elections, participating in the recruitment processes of political parties, or securing parliamentary seats without facing discrimination.

### 2. Method

This study will employ a comparative qualitative method. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding processes and meanings rather than relying on precise measurements, utilizing descriptive data to explore the subject matter. This approach is inherently subjective, often using informal language and involving direct interaction with the subjects being studied The comparative method involves analyzing several variables to identify similarities and differences, using specific indicators to connect and test the relevant issues. The combination of these methods will enable the author to effectively compare women's representation in the parliaments of Indonesia and Singapore.

Data collection will include both primary and secondary sources. Primary data will be gathered through interviews with a legislative member, a political party representative, Ikatan Wanita Pengusaha Indonesia (IWAPI) member, and National Development Planning Agency/Bappenas member while secondary data will be sourced from academic journals, literature, documents, and articles. The author believes this approach will be effective, ensuring that the data collected is relevant to contemporary developments. Interviews will further enhance the accuracy and reliability of the information obtained. The author aims to meet all data requirements for this final assignment by integrating research and interviews.

# 3. Results and Discussion

# 3.1 Government System Comparison of Indonesia and Singapore

Indonesia, an archipelagic nation in Southeast Asia, encompasses a land area of 1,922,570 km² and a water area of 3,257,483 km² (31). In contrast, Singapore, also situated in Southeast Asia, has a total area of 728.6 km², (32). Despite their differing geographical conditions, the two countries is closely located, and has maintained strong bilateral relations over the years. Notably, Singapore emerged as the largest foreign investor in Indonesia, with investments totaling US \$7.7 million as of 2023, according to CNBC Indonesia (33). A comparative analysis of the two countries reveals several differences in their governance structures, including the government system, representative institutions, terms of office, party systems, and women's quota systems. The table below illustrates these distinctions, highlighting that although Indonesia and Singapore both reflect democratic principles that employ multi-party systems, their governance

frameworks differ significantly. Indonesia operates under a presidential system, whereas Singapore follows a parliamentary republic system (34). The key distinction lies in the relationship between the executive and legislative branches, which characterizes the differences between parliamentary and presidential republics (35).

Table 3.1 Government System Comparison

Comparative Aspect	Indonesia	Singapore
Government System	Presidential	Parliamentary Republic
Representative Institution	Bicameral	Unicameral
Tomura	Evene	Parliament: 5 years
Tenure	5 years	President: 6 years
Party System	Multiparty system	Multiparty system
Women Quota System	30%	-

Sources: Processed by author

The presidential system is a form of government in which the president serves as both head of government and head of state. In this system, the executive and legislative branches possess balanced powers. Indonesia adheres to a presidential system grounded in the principle of Trias Politica, which divides governmental authority among three branches: the judiciary (comprising the Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and Judicial Commission), the executive (led by the President and Vice President), and the legislative (represented by the People's Consultative Assembly, People's Representative Council, and Regional Representative Council) (35). In contrast, Singapore's government operates as a Parliamentary Republic, combining elements of republicanism with a parliamentary system. Singapore's electoral process emphasizes the role of the populace, with elections for the Prime Minister occurring every five years and for the President every six years. In this structure, the President serves as head of state while the Prime Minister functions as head of government. Furthermore, the President has the authority to appoint the Prime Minister and cabinet members, who are directly accountable to Parliament (34).

In the context of representative institutions, Indonesia and Singapore can be distinguished by their respective legislative frameworks: Indonesia employs a bicameral system, while Singapore utilizes a unicameral system. Since the reform movement of 1998, Indonesia has adopted a bicameral parliamentary system to address the centralistic tendencies in governance that persisted from the Old Order through the New Order (36). This two-chamber structure serves as a mechanism for checks and balances within the legislative process (36). Indonesia's bicameral system consists of the People's Representative Council (DPR RI) as the lower house and the Regional Representative Council (DPR RI) as the upper house. The presence of two legislative bodies is intended to mitigate the potential for abuse of power that may arise in a unicameral system. Conversely, Singapore operates under a unicameral legislative system. This model emphasizes the principle of majority rule, deemed most compatible with democratic governance, as it reflects the "Will of the people" (37). Singapore's legislature consists solely of the Members of Parliament (MPs) (38). The Singaporean government prioritizes effectiveness and efficiency, and thus, the unicameral system, which streamlines the legislative process without the complexities of multiple parties engaged in checks and balances, is regarded as the most suitable structure for the nation.

Singapore and Indonesia both utilize multi-party systems to reflect their social diversity. Historical and socio-cultural factors significantly influence this pluralism (35). According to the Freedom House democracy index, Indonesia scores 57/100 and Singapore 48/100, both classified as "Partly Free" (39). The Economist Intelligence Unit ranks Indonesia 56th (6.53) and Singapore 69th (6.18) (40), indicating Indonesia's stronger democratic performance. A key difference is in their electoral processes: Indonesia scores 4 for fair national elections every five years, while Singapore scores only 1 due to the biased dominance of the People's Action Party (PAP) since 1959. The PAP's ties to business elites raise concerns about electoral fairness (39).

An assessment of pluralism and political participation reveals that Indonesia and Singapore received a score of 2 out of 4 for political rights, particularly concerning women. In Indonesia, women are granted full political rights, and political parties are mandated to implement a 30% gender quota. However, representation remains low, with women comprising only 21.6% of the DPR legislative body (39). In contrast, women in Singapore are significantly underrepresented in senior government and political positions. Unlike Singapore, Indonesia has enacted policies addressing workplace discrimination through Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower.

The democracy index indicates that Indonesia consistently ranks higher than Singapore, reflecting its efforts to foster a more democratic environment. Freedom and democracy are intertwined in this context, and while Indonesia has made strides toward establishing a democratic society, significant improvements are still needed to achieve full justice. The democracy index serves as a vital indicator of gender equality in both countries. Understanding the state of democracy allows for a clearer assessment of women's rights, representation, and gender-based discrimination, making it essential to examine the index to evaluate women's participation in parliament in Indonesia and Singapore.

# 3.2 Indonesia and Singapore Women's Participation in Parliaments Comparison

Women's participation in parliament has emerged as a critical priority for the governments of Indonesia and Singapore. To grasp the complexities of this issue, it is vital to examine the underlying factors, particularly the pervasive gender-based discrimination that adversely affects women's societal conditions and, consequently, their political engagement. This challenge is acknowledged not only by Indonesian and Singaporean authorities but also by global institutions such as the United Nations, which has incorporated gender equality into its frameworks, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, effective government interventions are essential for fostering gender equality and enhancing women's legislative representation.

Table 3.2 Indonesia and Singapore Women's Participation in Parliaments Comparison

<b>General Election</b>	Indonesia	Singapore
1	18% (2009)	23% (2011)
2	17,3% (2014)	23,91% (2015)
3	20,5% (2019)	29,47% (2020)

Source: processed by author

The data indicates women's participation in parliament in Indonesia and Singapore over the last three general elections. Notably, the number of women in Singapore's parliament consistently exceeds Indonesia's, which raises questions given Indonesia's higher democracy index. Both countries have

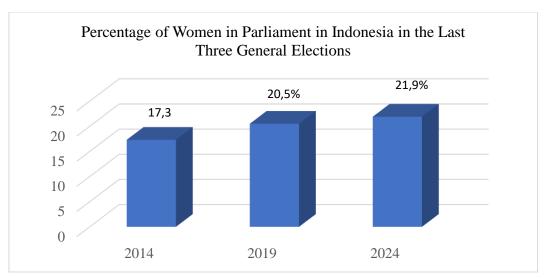
committed to enhancing gender equality through the ratification of international conventions and domestic policies.

The author categorizes government actions into two types: external and internal. External actions are demonstrated by the ratification of conventions addressing women's issues. Both Indonesia and Singapore have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention on Equal Pay (International Labor Organization, 2024). These ratifications reflect a serious commitment to addressing women's rights. However, there are differences in their ratification of specific ILO conventions. Indonesia has ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111), while Singapore has ratified only Convention No. 100 (ILO, 2017). Internally, both governments have undertaken various initiatives to address gender equality and increase women's representation in parliament. Further comparisons regarding women's parliamentary participation in both countries will be discussed in the following sections.

# 3.2.1 Women's Participation in the Parliament of Indonesia

The reformation era in Indonesia marked a significant commitment to improving women's rights, exemplified by the issuance of Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 concerning Gender Mainstreaming by President Abdurrahman Wahid (13). This initiative emerged from the IV World Conference on Women, where Indonesia was tasked with implementing gender mainstreaming strategies (12). The goal of this strategy is to develop policies and programs that address gender equality issues in Indonesia. Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 aims to integrate a gender perspective into the preparation, planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of national development policies and programs, thereby promoting gender equality and justice across community, family, national, and state levels (13). This policy emphasizes the active involvement of women as equal participants in national and community development. Additionally, the Indonesian government has implemented a policy requiring that 30% of parliamentary candidates be women, representing a form of affirmative action designed to address inequalities and enhance women's political participation (9). As Bacchi (1996) notes, affirmative actions are targeted programs aimed at improving inequality. This increase in women's representation, particularly in legislative bodies, is facilitated through a quota mechanism.

The legal framework for this quota began with Article 65, paragraph 1 of Law No. 12 of 2003 concerning General Elections, which stipulates that political parties must ensure at least 30% women's representation among their candidates for the DPR, Provincial DPRD, and Regency/City DPRD. Subsequent laws, including Law No. 10 of 2008, Law No. 8 of 2012, Law No. 7 of 2017, and the most recent Law No. 7 of 2023, have continued to reinforce this requirement. Through these policies, political parties are encouraged to nominate at least 30% of women for both the DPR and DPRD (41). To illustrate the progress in women's parliamentary participation in Indonesia, the following data presents the percentage of women in parliament over the last three elections.



Graph 3.1 Indonesia's Women's Participation in Parliament Percentage

Source: Representasi Perempuan di Parlemen Hasil Pemilu 2019: Tantangan dan Peluang – Juniar Laras Table 3.3 Comparison of Women and Men Members of the Indonesian Parliament

Period	Women	Men
2014-2019	97 (17,3%)	463 (82,7%)
2019-2024	118 (20,5%)	457 (79,5%)
2024-2029	127 (21,9%)	453 (78,1%)

Source: processed by author

The data indicates that women's participation in parliament remains significantly lower than that of men. Daniel Johan, a member of the People's Representative Council (DPR-RI) from *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB) during the 2019-2024 period, observed that while there has been progress in women's involvement in national politics. Women comprised approximately 17% of DPR members from 2014 to 2019, increasing to around 21% in the subsequent term. He also noted that women are increasingly occupying leadership roles at both executive and regional head levels. The DPR has established a women's caucus to ensure that women's issues are addressed within the legislative framework. He also stated that political parties are instrumental in enhancing women's political participation, acting as a vital link between the public and government. Aspiring candidates often pursue political office through these parties, at local or national levels. Despite these advancements, Indonesia has yet to achieve the 30% target for women's representation. Mr. Johan attributes this shortfall to several factors, including a lack of political awareness among women, particularly in rural areas, regarding the significance of their political participation.

Farah Savira, a member of the Golongan Karya (Golkar) party, emphasized that both internal and external factors influence women's representation in parliament. While Golkar is committed to promoting female leadership, she highlighted that the electability of female candidates is crucial for meeting affirmative policy goals. She stressed the importance of women balancing their political responsibilities

with family roles and possessing the courage to advocate for their interests. Additionally, having mentors and robust support from political parties is essential for providing guidance and constructive feedback. She emphasized the need for efforts to rebuild public trust, which has been undermined by negative stereotypes about women. As this trust gradually develops, women will be more readily accepted as contributors to politics, particularly in parliament.

# 3.2.2 Women's Participation in the Parliament of Singapore

Singapore, in contrast, employs different strategies to enhance women's participation in parliament. While the country has ratified various international conventions to affirm its commitment to women's rights in politics, a key distinction from Indonesia is the absence of a gender quota policy as a form of affirmative action. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) believes that such quotas could undermine women's credibility. This perspective is rooted in the party's conservative ideology and patriarchal values, which emphasize traditional gender roles, viewing men as heads of households and women as caregivers. This double standard is reflected in historical policies, such as when only male civil servants were permitted to claim family health costs, effectively excluding women from similar benefits.

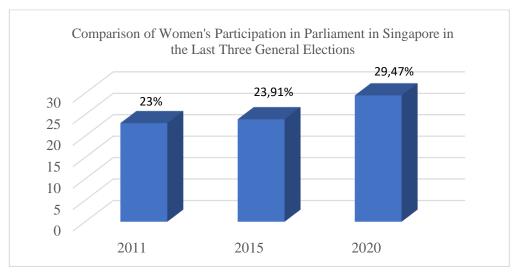
The influence of the People's Action Party (PAP) is pivotal in understanding Singaporean politics, particularly regarding women's participation in parliament. The fluctuations in women's representation can be directly attributed to the PAP's initiatives. In 1954, the PAP's election manifesto prominently featured women's rights and participation, signaling an early commitment to gender equality. This commitment was further solidified with the establishment of the Women's Affairs Bureau and the introduction of the Women's Charter in 1961, which became a significant milestone for women in Singapore by providing essential protections and rights (42). The Women's Charter addresses gender equality primarily within the family context, covering issues such as marriage, divorce, and child custody.

Subsequent developments included the adoption of the principle of "Equal pay for equal work" in 1962, the formation of the Women's Sub-Committee within the National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) in 1973, and the establishment of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) in 1980 (43). Over the years, Singapore has made significant strides in increasing women's representation in politics. However, following a decline in the PAP's popularity in 2001, the party recognized the need for an image overhaul to engage new voters. In response, the PAP Women's Wing was launched in 2009 to achieve 30% representation of women in Singapore's Parliament.

While this target is not formally enshrined in the party's constitution or state policy, the PAP's substantial influence has positively impacted women's representation in parliament. For instance, in the 2011 elections, the PAP nominated 18 female candidates, of whom 16 were elected. This underscores the importance of political will in enhancing women's political participation. The author posits that political will is foundational to political awareness and is essential for fostering societal change through inclusive policies that promote political efficacy.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain regarding the equity of political opportunities for women in Singapore. The PAP, as the dominant political party, has been criticized for its closed recruitment system, which selectively invites women deemed "capable" to join the party, thereby limiting broader access for all Singaporeans (29). The criteria for "eligibility" set by the PAP appear biased and suggest systemic discrimination. As highlighted by Devasahayam in her analysis, women in Singapore are often

regarded as the "second sex" in comparison to men. This perspective reflects a lingering belief in male superiority and female inferiority, particularly within the PAP's political culture.



Graph 3.2 Comparison of Women's Participation in Parliament in Singapore in the Last Three General Elections

The data shows that women's participation in Singapore's parliament has been stable, with consistency from 2011 to 2015 and a significant increase in 2020. However, the PAP's target of 30% representation—around 25 MPs—has not been met. Although this target is not mandatory, it has historically encouraged higher female participation. Since Singapore follows a non-quota strategy, it must find other ways to boost women's representation. Netina Tan suggests strategies such as promoting gender diversity, building partnerships with business leaders, setting corporate targets, offering training for female leaders, and highlighting gender diversity in corporate evaluations. Despite not reaching the 30% target, Singapore has made progress with pro-women policies. While these policies aren't strictly enforced, the government is working to create a supportive environment for women. Trust in women has improved significantly compared to earlier years when patriarchal views were more prevalent.

# 3.3 Analysis

The author highlights the differences in gender equality between Indonesia and Singapore by presenting comparative data from the Interparliamentary Union (IPU), the Gender Inequality Index (GII) by the United Nations Development Program, and the Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum. The data reveals significant disparities in female representation. In the IPU index, which ranks countries based on female representation in parliament, Indonesia is positioned at 108, while Singapore ranks higher at 70. In the GII, Singapore ranks 8, indicating very high human development, whereas Indonesia ranks 109 with high human development status. Lastly, the Gender Gap Index places Indonesia at 87, while Singapore is ranked 49. These rankings illustrate that Singapore consistently outperforms Indonesia in terms of gender equality indicators

Table 3.4 Indonesia and Singapore Gender Equality Comparison

Indicator	Indonesia	Singapore
Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) 2024	Rank 108	Rank 70
Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022	Rank 109	Rank 8
Gender Gap 2023	Rank 87	Rank 49

Source: Processed by author

This topic is particularly intriguing given the democracy index indicates that Indonesia's democracy ranks higher than Singapore's. Both countries have implemented policies aimed at improving women's living conditions, but a significant difference lies in Indonesia's adoption of a gender quota system, while Singapore has not. The author argues that Indonesia remains focused on government policies to combat negative perceptions of women in politics. However, these policies alone are insufficient; the gender quota has not been met, and gender equality in Indonesia requires further improvement. Farah Savira, a member of the Golongan Karya Party (Golkar), noted that only 20 out of 102 Golkar seats in the DPR were filled by women, and just 2 out of 10 in the DPRD. Although Indonesia mandates that political parties include at least 30% female candidates, the effectiveness of this quota depends on community choices. Notably, there are no sanctions for parties that fail to meet this requirement, allowing them to participate in elections regardless of compliance (44). This raises questions about the sincerity of affirmative action policies and whether they genuinely empower women or merely fulfill regulatory obligations.

In contrast, Singapore, which does not enforce a binding gender quota, ranks higher on gender equality indices. This success can be attributed to Singapore's effective promotion of gender equality and its citizens' mindset. Despite the imbalance in male and female representation, Singapore has implemented pro-women policies that enhance gender equality. The author suggests that policies related to women's political participation need to be firmly established as a legal basis for elections. Singapore has significantly shifted its view of women's roles since earlier patriarchal norms, though current policies primarily address women's rights in family and workplace contexts. To maintain this progress, it is essential to create safe political spaces for women to further improve gender equality in the country.

Trust and legitimacy between the community and the government are fundamentally rooted in political awareness, which is closely linked to political participation—a key concept in this paper. According to Suparto, higher political awareness leads to increased political participation (26). Miriam Budiardjo (2008) further supports this by stating that elevated political awareness enhances government legitimacy and encourages citizens to assert their voting rights (37). However, a lack of political awareness poses challenges to achieving the goals of affirmative policies, particularly regarding women's participation in parliament. This is especially evident in Indonesia, where insufficient political awareness among women, particularly in rural areas, has hindered progress toward desired representation levels.

The commitment to achieving gender equality in Indonesia and Singapore can be assessed through their efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, particularly target 5.5, which aims to ensure full and effective participation of women in decision-making roles across political, economic, and public life. This target includes the indicator measuring the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments. Globally, the UN has projected that SDG 5 will not be fully

realized by 2030, estimating that achieving equal representation in national parliaments could take up to 47 years. As of 2023, women's participation in national parliaments has risen to 26.5%, but the full realization of SDG 5.5 is still projected to take over four decades (45).

In Indonesia, efforts to achieve SDG 5.5 include adaptations of targets to align with local conditions, as confirmed by an interview with Bappenas. The country remains committed to gender equality, as outlined in its Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM). However, despite these commitments, Indonesia's progress remains insufficient, as indicated by various gender equality indexes. Conversely, Singapore is actively working towards SDG 5.5 as well. The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) supports women aiming for leadership roles and community contributions. Initiatives like BoardAgender facilitate women's leadership development and raise awareness of gender-based issues. Through these efforts, Singapore has consistently improved its gender equality landscape.

As previously discussed, Indonesia has committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, supported by the policy framework established in the Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM) issued by Bappenas. Both Indonesia and Singapore have implemented pro-women policies that align with the SDG objective of Gender Mainstreaming. The primary goal of SDG 5.5 is to ensure women's participation in politics, particularly in parliament, thereby fostering the development of pro-women policies and enhancing global gender equality. Beyond affirmative action, Indonesia has made efforts to increase women's political participation and improve gender equality. Qurrota A'yun, the coordinator for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment at Bappenas, highlighted that Indonesia has ratified international conventions and established a commitment to these goals through the RPJM. This document serves as a foundational framework for realizing SDG 5 (Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment). Bappenas, responsible for accelerating the implementation of SDGs in Indonesia, allocates budgets for relevant programs and actively promotes the achievement of these objectives. The agency focuses on enhancing gender equality policies and providing training to strengthen gender perspectives across various ministries.

The feminist theory underpinning this analysis posits that women's movements are essential for enacting change. Interviewees underscored the importance of women taking proactive steps to reshape societal perceptions regarding their roles. Farah Savira emphasized the necessity for women to cultivate self-confidence to voice their opinions and gain public recognition. Nana Krit, Vice Chair of the Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs Association (IWAPI), stressed the importance of women pursuing higher education as a means of elevating their status. These insights suggest that empowering women to assert themselves will demonstrate their capabilities and credibility within the political sphere. Furthermore, the theory highlights the need to transform restrictive gender norms that delineate roles for men and women. All interviewees concurred on the necessity of increased action from women to enhance public confidence, indicating that as women gain courage, traditional gender norms can be challenged and dismantled.

As noted by Bappenas member Ms. Qurrota Ayun, addressing gender inequality requires both structural and cultural improvements. The feminist perspective emphasizes that women's contributions are essential in theory and practice, particularly in politics, and that public trust significantly influences the election of female parliament members. Therefore, issues such as gender-based discrimination, patriarchal thinking, and public scepticism about women's potential must be urgently addressed. Given that gender inequality is deeply rooted in societal constructs, a cultural approach is essential for resolution. The author argues that government efforts focused solely on achieving gender quota targets do not

guarantee the quality of women's participation in parliament. This emphasis on structural issues suggests a lack of equivalent attention to cultural factors, which are fundamental to the problem.

This raises a critical question: Do the Indonesian and Singaporean governments implement gender quotas, both formally and informally, merely to boost participation, or do they genuinely aim to represent women's interests? The findings of this study indicate that discrimination persists and gender equality remains unachieved. Therefore, even if the government claims to support women's advancement, the author believes that such intentions have not yet been realized. The author contends that Indonesia primarily focuses on participation rates without ensuring that elected women genuinely represent the interests of all women, as emphasized by feminist theory. In contrast, Singapore has demonstrated a consistent commitment to representing women, resulting in more effective progress in increasing gender equality within the country.

The theory of women's participation in politics highlights patriarchy as a key barrier to women's engagement (46). This is evident in Indonesia and Singapore, where gender equality indices reveal that women's parliamentary participation remains below established targets. Women in Singapore are often viewed as inferior, with the dominant People's Action Party (PAP) limiting opportunities for broader female representation through closed recruitment processes (15). The author argues that increasing public awareness of the negative impacts of patriarchy is essential. Female leaders like Farah Savira, Nana Krit, and Qurota A'yun recognize that both internal and external factors hinder women's political representation. A'yun notes that while Indonesia has affirmative policies, cultural biases against women in leadership persist. She advocates for a combined approach to strengthen structural policies and cultural attitudes towards women in leadership. By addressing these factors, societal biases can be reduced, enhancing women's self-confidence and enabling their advancement into strategic roles. This underscores the alignment between the theory of women's participation and the realities in society.

#### 3. Conclusion

Women often face discrimination rooted in patriarchal beliefs and social constructions. This article examines efforts to combat gender-based discrimination in various countries, particularly Indonesia and Singapore, highlighting the negative impact on women's freedom and democratic participation. Despite affirmative policies in Indonesia, women's political representation remains low compared to Singapore, which, while lacking formal gender quotas, has successfully increased female participation in parliament. The article emphasizes the need for both structural and cultural changes to address the underlying biases that hinder women's leadership. Public trust in women's capabilities is crucial for political participation, and the ingrained negative perceptions about female leadership must be challenged. While both countries have ratified international conventions and set targets within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), progress toward achieving gender equality remains insufficient. In Singapore, the dominant People's Action Party (PAP) has influenced gender representation, achieving higher rates of women's parliamentary involvement through informal measures. The importance of public legitimacy and political awareness is reiterated, as these factors directly correlate with women's participation in politics. The article concludes that while Singapore currently outperforms Indonesia in gender equality, both nations must intensify their efforts to realize comprehensive gender equality and empower women in political decision-making.

#### 4. Conflict of Interest

Regarding this article, the authors state that there are no conflicts of interest. They have no professional, financial, or personal ties that might be interpreted as affecting the study or its findings. The

data gathered and the authors' research are the only sources of all conclusions and interpretations offered. To ensure openness and preserve the integrity of the study, all possible conflicts of interest have been declared. Future conflicts will be reported as soon as possible in compliance with ethical standards.

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