

Marginalization of Women's Issues in the 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Debates

 Ismail Pane ^{a1}  Mara Ongku Hasibuan ^b

^a Institut Agama Islam Dar Aswaja Rokan Hilir Riau, Indonesia

^b Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia

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Abstract

Women have the same position in the state; although the gender of men and women is different, both are equal in role and position. The Republic of Indonesia, as a state of law (*rechtsstaat*), guarantees the rights of all citizens without distinguishing between genders and guarantees constitutional rights in the 1945 Constitution. This study highlights the lack of discussion of women's issues in the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential candidate debate as part of the democratic process. Using a qualitative method with a literature review approach from news media, journals, and related documents, this study found that discrimination of women's issues in the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential candidate debate could impact the slow national development process. These impacts include gender inequality, injustice in employment, unequal education, unbalanced child nutritional growth, and suboptimal maternal and child welfare. Sexual violence and domestic violence also have the potential to increase due to the lack of in-depth discussion in the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential candidate debate. As a result, the electability of presidential candidates will be the focus of public attention after the discussion because the debate serves as a stage to test candidates' resilience, vision, and ability to convey ideas.



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INTRODUCTION

Women still face various obstacles to achieving equal standing in the political arena. Although the genders differ, both must be considered equal in role and position. In the past, women were often only allowed to do housework and become housewives (Yandy & Mustajab, 2021; Suhenty, 2020). However, women must also be involved in the progress of the nation. According to Jawad, eight women's rights must be equalized, including the right to ownership, education, identity, sexual pleasure, inheritance, and participation in elections and public affairs (Purwanto, 2019). In Indonesia, women's representation in politics still needs to reach expectations. Women who enter politics are often constrained by patriarchal cultural backgrounds and gender differences (Pasaribu, n.d.). Recent research shows that despite progress, women face various systemic political barriers (Smith et al., 2011; Smith & Sinkford, 2022). Studies show that women's representation in politics worldwide is still hampered by gender stereotypes, discrimination, and lack of political party support (Tadevich et al., 2024; Kweon, 2024; Khelghat et al., 2020). Therefore, there is a need for more inclusive policies and public education that promote gender equality in politics.

Research Anifatul Kiftiyah's research entitled Women in political participation in Indonesia in

¹
ismailpane86@gmail.com

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her research is often in the spotlight such as patriarchy; Islam itself requires equality of position between men and women such as in politics, women in 1998 began to dare to voice their opinions, this research women in politics have not been maximally represented (Kiftiyah, 2019). Furthermore, research by Sarina et al., gender discrimination against women workers in the Makassar industrial area, discrimination can occur in the Makassar industrial area because of stereotypes that state that women are still considered weak; there is an assumption that women are still regarded as incapable of becoming leaders in companies, lack of understanding of gender equality issues, and women are still limited by the reason that women who are married and have children should not work (Sarina & Ahmad, 2021). At the same time, this study highlights women's issues because they were briefly mentioned in the 2024 presidential and vice presidential candidate debates. Women, the nation's future, must be involved in high-level politics in Indonesia. The development of a country has a significant impact on women's issues, both economically and mentally.

This study aims to protect women's rights and ensure respect for these rights, especially considering the low participation of women in development and the still widespread practice of gender discrimination in society. Gender equality must be fought for to overcome the gap in women's participation in politics, economics, social, and education. The less-than-optimal position of women has encouraged activists and the Indonesian government to empower women and free them from backwardness. Government efforts include the establishment of a particular ministry that handles women's issues, as seen in the establishment of the National Commission on Women based on Presidential Decree Number 181/1998, which is tasked with eliminating Domestic Violence (KDRT) and becoming a motivator for gender equality in Indonesia. This study also aims to highlight the importance of the role of women in all aspects of national life and urge presidential candidates in the 2024 election not to ignore the problems and solutions related to women in Indonesia. In addition, this study aims to increase public awareness and policymakers about the need for inclusive and gender-equitable policies that can provide equal access for women in education, employment, and health. Thus, this research hopes to encourage the implementation of effective policies to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women, as well as improve the welfare of mothers and children as an integral part of sustainable national development (Purwanto, 2019).

Discrimination of women's issues in the 2024 presidential and vice presidential candidate debates held by the General Election Commission (KPU) five times; after two debates, the women's problem was not explicitly discussed (Achidsti, 2024) there was only one question in the first debate at that time the three presidential and vice presidential candidates did not discuss women's issues in depth only exploring the surface did not reach the current women's problems in Indonesia. Furthermore, in the fifth or final debate, the presidential and vice presidential candidates invited various responses from women activists because it was not satisfactory and had not touched on the root of the problem, according to Zumrotin K Susilo in the last presidential candidate debate the KPU determined eight themes, namely social welfare, culture, education, information technology, health, employment, human resources, and inclusion. Although the discussion of women's issues has not been in-depth, and there are still presidential candidates who do not understand gender equality (Sinombor, 2024), this has an impact on injuring women's rights in high-level politics in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research method uses a literature review approach with a qualitative research type from various sources, including news media, journals, and other related sources. The data collection process is carried out by analyzing content (content analysis) from multiple sources, especially from news sources, online media, journals, and relevant previous research (Krippendorff, 2004; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The data analysis technique uses qualitative analysis. The first step is to collect data from leading news media that report the presidential candidate debate events through content analysis (Weber, 1990; Schreier, 2012).

Data collection was carried out in several stages. First, sources or variables such as newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, notes, transcripts, letters, agendas, and other documents related to this research are utilized (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003). The second stage was to identify various issues that emerged during the debate and how the media portrayed them, including women's issues rarely mentioned and discussed (Tuchman, 1978; Fricker, 2007). This study also describes women's rights, which are highly guaranteed and protected by law, and the impact if women are not involved (Connell, 2009; Fraser, 1995). The third stage was to conclude this study by considering the findings of the content analysis and linking them to existing theories and literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2013). The validity of the research data was guaranteed through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories. Source triangulation is done by comparing information from various documents, media, and other records to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the data collected (Denzin, 1978). Method triangulation is applied using various data collection techniques, such as content analysis and interviews, to gain a more comprehensive view. Theory triangulation links research findings with relevant theories to provide a solid and in-depth analytical framework (Yin, 2003). By using this triangulation approach, this study is expected to provide more valid and reliable results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidate Debate

Effect of the presidential debate in several literature, such as Geer's research (1998), the impact of the discussion affects undecided voters and those who have weak ties to the candidate, while Holber argues that the debate can only have a minimal effect on changing a person's choice, Cantu and Carreras in their findings the impact of the discussion will have an influence and play an essential role in influencing a person's choice in countries with weak party systems, such as low voter closeness to the party and the lack of institutionalization of political parties (Fernandes, 2024).

The presidential candidate debate is an integral part of the presidential election, and it aims to show the candidates' vision, mission, and plans. This debate allows voters to understand the policies carried out by the elected candidates, especially regarding women's issues. Suppose women's issues should be discussed more in-depth. In that case, various problems, such as the right to education, work, maternity leave, maternal and child welfare, political participation, sexual violence, and gender equality, will emerge. Emphasis on these issues is essential because it shows how the candidates will address them. Without a clear commitment to the right to education and work, women may continue to face discrimination and inequality (Wieringa, 2015; Syukri, 2023). Policies regarding maternity leave and maternal and child welfare need to be considered to support women's roles as mothers and workers. Equal political opportunities are essential, considering women's participation is minimal. In addition, sexual violence and efforts to achieve gender equality require attention and firm policies (Mahfud & Rizanizarli, 2021). Discussing these issues in the presidential debate shows the candidates' commitment to equality and justice for all citizens, including women.

Women's right to education is fundamental to getting attention from the government. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that in 2022, the wage gap between male and female workers reached 22.09 percent, an increase from 20.39 percent in the previous year (BPS, 2022). This encourages women to continue to fight for their rights in the field of work. In addition, the issue of maternity leave is also an essential concern for women. Discussion on the Draft Law on Maternal and Child Welfare (RUU KIA), which proposes an additional six months of maternity leave and leave for male workers whose wives give birth, has not reached an agreement, and it is still unclear when the law will be passed (DPRI, 2023). This proposal has also been rejected by several industries, including the Indonesian Employers' Association (APINDO), who are concerned that it will hurt company performance (APINDO, 2023). However, Luluk Nur Hamidah, a member of Commission VI of the Indonesian House of Representatives, emphasized that the government must be firm and able to bridge the interests of female workers and companies. Luluk added that six months of maternity leave for female workers who give birth can help reduce stunting and malnutrition in children, which is the government's target. Therefore, the issue of maternity leave

and the laws that regulate it are still an essential struggle for women in Indonesia (Rusta et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the impact on the presidential and vice presidential candidate pairs will affect the aftermath of the first presidential debate, and the electability of the presidential candidates will become the focus of public attention. The debate becomes a battle stage to test the candidates' toughness, vision, and ability to convey ideas. In some cases, the debate significantly impacts public perception of the presidential candidates. Discussion of electability after the first presidential debate includes shifts in support, public response, and political strategies each candidate takes. The first presidential debate creates new dynamics in the electability map. Post-debate survey analysis often reflects the extent to which each candidate has succeeded in conveying their message to voters. Public response to the candidates' appearance can influence significant changes in the level of support. The electability of candidates who may have been strong before the debate could be shaken, while candidates considered weak can gain additional support (Widayanti & Fridayanti, 2023).

There are two main possibilities regarding the impact of debates on the final election results. One possibility is that swing voters and the distance between candidate pairs play a crucial role. A candidate pair with low pre-debate polling could outperform others if they effectively influence swing voters during the debate, affecting the final election outcome. In the 2024 Presidential Election, debates are expected to have a more significant impact on voters' decisions than in previous elections due to the increased rationality, education, and technological literacy of the populace. Adi Prayitno, Director of Indonesian Political Parameters (PPI), predicts that a higher percentage of voters will change their political choices after watching the debates compared to the 2019 Presidential Election, where 5-6 percent of people changed their choices post-debate. The presidential debate reflects a country's political dynamics and demonstrates candidates' understanding of the political landscape and voter needs. It is a platform for candidates to strengthen support, gain public sympathy, and address challenges. Success in debates can significantly boost a candidate's electability, while mistakes can damage their image. In the social media era, debates generate widespread discussion and comments online, providing insight into public perception. The debates, held five times, have become a major topic in Indonesia due to the significant role of various media outlets, including radio, television, magazines, newspapers, and online media (Widayanti & Fridayanti, 2023).

The Impact of Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidate Ideas on Discrimination against Women

The impact of discrimination against women is a pressing issue that must be addressed by the three presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The following is data on the programs and ideas of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates related to women's issues:

Table 1. Ideas of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates

No	Anis Muhaimin Iskandar	Baswedan-Iskandar	Prabowo Rakabuming Raka	Subianto-Gibran	Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD
1	Realizing pregnancies and childbirth, health education from adolescence, providing balanced and free nutrition, and accompanying pregnant women until the first 1,000 days of the child's life.	healthy and such as	Strengthening gender equality and protecting women's rights such as the right to education, employment, participation	political	Providing nutritional support for mothers and children during pregnancy and breastfeeding for the first 1000 days, nutritional supply for children up to 5 years, target below 9% of stunted children, supported by mothers and fathers as family guardians.
2	We should support	support	Nutritional assistance	for	Providing support to women in

	women in every role by providing leave for husbands when their wives give birth and requiring employers to provide permission and leave for pregnant and maternity mothers.	pregnant women	various fields, strengthening their position in employment relations, and increasing maternity leave for fathers and mothers ensure that wages and benefits remain 100% intact.
3	Providing quality, affordable childcare and lactation rooms in every public space.	Prioritize women's protection laws	Ensuring women's equality in employment relations for caregiving roles.
4	Prohibit discrimination and support women as heads of families.	Strengthening the role, function, institutions and budget for women's empowerment	
5	Providing 24-hour security, safe houses, free medical, psychological and legal services.		
6	Enforce laws on sexual violence crimes to protect women.		
7	Equality of opportunity for women in various fields.		
8	Meningkatkan pemberdayaan perempuan melalui PKK.		

Source: Sinombor (2024) Presidential candidate pairs' programs and ideas for women

From the data above, the discussion by the three candidate pairs has yet to be in-depth, as mentioned by Zumrotin K Susilo; according to him, it could be because of minimal time. Crucial matters such as the rights of migrant workers have not been fully discussed. In the discussion of the 2024 presidential debate, for example, the issue of sexual violence was conveyed by presidential candidate number 1, maternal mortality rates and equality in access to education were conveyed by presidential candidate number 2, then prevention of stunting since women are about to get married and the issue of anemia that is often experienced by women and pregnant women raised by presidential candidate number 3 (Sinombor, 2024). Apart from this, as mentioned by Ratna, although the discussion of the issue of women has yet to be sharp, at least the issue of women is discussed as a particular topic and is a relief for several women activists. The presidential candidates have also seen the problems faced by women in Indonesia.

If women's issues are not addressed seriously, women's rights can be discriminated against, as in the case of unresolved immigrant workers. According to Armayanti Sanusi, in the presidential debate on Sunday night, the issue of foreign workers had yet to be viewed comprehensively by the three presidential candidates, who still tended to focus on curative steps through case handling. According to Achidasti (2024), the three presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs have offered programs that favor women in their vision and mission documents. For example, the Anies

Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar pair promised that women would be safe from violence, the Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD pair offered the Jaga Teman program, and the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka pair promised to strengthen gender equality and protect the rights of women and children. The promises of the three presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs need to be further examined because their main challenge is changing the patriarchal social structure that supports the power imbalance. Their programs must focus on prevention, not just handling cases, to avoid household economic instability that can trigger violence. Toxic masculinity often leads to violence against women. In 2023, violence against women and children in Indonesia became a serious concern, with 1,290 cases reported, including physical, online, gender-based, and sexual violence (Achidsti, 2024).

The consequences of gender inequality cause problems when the process of objectification of the subject occurs and triggers issues around domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and various discrimination issues (Benamen & Batlayeri, 2023). The phenomenon of women working outside the home is considered by many to be something relatively new to Indonesian society. Although it is increasingly common, the role of women is not considered successful enough if the success of managing a household does not accompany the success of building a career. The perception of the importance of the role of work and family from the importance of work, parents, and partners is measured by work commitment, parent commitment, partner commitment, work value, parent value, and partner value (Supriadi, 2021).

The Impact of Discrimination on Women's Issues in the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidate Debate

In the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential elections, women's issues often lack sufficient attention in debates. Critical topics like educational equality, employment opportunities, maternity leave, and protection from violence should be thoroughly discussed to promote gender equality and social justice. Neglecting these issues can worsen discrimination and hinder social progress for women. This study aims to examine how the insufficient focus on women's issues in political debates exacerbates gender discrimination and impedes social advancement in Indonesia, and to provide recommendations for prioritizing these issues in national political discourse:

Table 2. Impact of discrimination on women's issues in the 2024 presidential election debate

No	Unfair Equality	Gender	Job education	equality, unequal	Unbalanced Growth in Children	Nutritional
1	Gender equality will promote national development. Otherwise, the nation's process will not be balanced, and the state will give everyone equal access.	national	Presidential candidates should discuss women's rights and entrepreneurship in depth. Otherwise, women will become immigrants who often suffer after working abroad.	and vice presidential candidates should discuss women's employment and gaining access to entrepreneurship in depth.	One of the leading programs of presidential candidates 01, 02, and 03 is the provision of free meals to improve the nutrition of children and pregnant women. If elected, this program will be a priority to ensure adequate nutrition since pregnancy. Without rights such as nutrition, child protection, and maternity leave with full benefits, women will experience discrimination due to the imbalance of nutrition provided by the government.	

If women are not involved and discussed seriously in the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential candidate debates, it will harm women's existence, and violence will continue to be rampant. Violence against women and children in 2023 will be a red mark for Indonesia. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, from January to November 2023, there were 1,290 cases of violence against women and children reported through the Sahabat Perempuan dan Anak (SAPA) 129 service. Of the total cases, the most common types of violence

were physical violence in the domestic area (domestic violence/KDRT), online gender-based violence, and sexual violence (Arika, 2024). These data are certainly not final figures. Another note from the DKI Jakarta Population Control, Child Protection, and Empowerment Service: There were 1,089 cases of violence against women and children in the period from January to August 2023. The scope of the most violent incidents was still the same, namely domestic violence, followed by sexual violence (Arika, 2024). The final presidential debate held by the General Election Commission on Sunday, February 4, 2024, evening invited various responses from women activists. Although it was not satisfactory and did not touch on the root of the problem, the women's issues raised by the presidential candidates in the final debate proved that women's issues are essential for the future government to pay attention to. Women's issues have indeed begun to be raised, but not in depth. Maybe because time is limited, said Zumrotin K Susilo, a Supervisory Board of the Women's Health Foundation member and a former commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission.

In the final presidential debate, the KPU set eight themes but did not explore gender equality in depth. Despite this, there was optimism that women's issues would be seriously addressed. Iskandar highlighted the need to document and review the candidates' promises on women's issues once they are in office (Iskandar, 2022; Kamal at al., 2023). Ratna Batara Munti, Director of LBH APIK West Java, found it reassuring that women's issues, such as sexual violence, maternal mortality, and stunting, were being discussed by the candidates (Nurdin, 2024). Although the discussions lacked depth, acknowledging these issues was seen as a positive development by women activists, who hope the elected candidates will address these problems effectively (Rahmanto et al., 2021). The issue of women in the 2024 presidential debate shows that attention to women's issues is still minimal. Although this issue has begun to be discussed, the discussion has yet to be in-depth. Data shows that the word "women" was only mentioned nine times by candidate pair 01, six times by candidate 02, and two times by candidate 03 in the vision-mission document, totaling 143 pages (Sinombor, 2024). Armayanti Sanusi from the Women's Solidarity Association considers that the issue of foreign workers and women's rights in leadership and politics has yet to be discussed thoroughly. Preventive efforts to address economic inequality and create safe and inclusive jobs for women have also yet to be a priority for the three candidates.

Women and children were not explicitly discussed in depth in at least two debates of the 2024 Election. During the first debate for presidential candidates, there was only one question that touched on inclusive public services, including for women and children. At that time, the three presidential candidates only touched on the surface, such as ensuring the involvement of women's groups and child observers in the development planning deliberation process (musrenbang) and super apps that can respond to the needs of public services, including women and children. However, the problems Indonesian women and children are currently experiencing, and the proposed solutions were not discussed in depth (Umam, 2024). Violence against women and children in 2023 became a red mark for Indonesia. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, from January to November 2023, there were 1,290 cases of violence against women and children reported through the Sahabat Perempuan dan Anak (SAPA) 129 service. Of the total cases, the most common types of violence are physical violence in the domestic area (domestic violence/KDRT), online gender-based violence, and sexual violence (Rahmatika, 2021; Siswoyo & Siswadi, 2024).

The data is certainly not the final figure. According to records from the DKI Jakarta Empowerment, Child Protection, and Population Control Service, there were 1,089 cases of violence against women and children in the period from January to August 2023. The most common type of violence is still the same, namely domestic violence, followed by sexual violence. Complaints regarding violence against women and children are spread across various complaint institutions in each region. This figure is believed not to be the actual number of cases because the violence reported is only a case recorded based on complaints. If there are victims who do not report the violence they experience, the case will not be recorded. Like the iceberg phenomenon, only a few violent cases are revealed. For example, the rape case in Purwakarta by a religious teacher with the initials ON, which was only revealed in December 2023 after going on for five

years, with ten victims from grade 4 of elementary school to grade 3 of junior high school (Arika, 2024). This shows that violence against women and children is an urgent problem that needs to be resolved by the three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of serious attention to women's issues in the 2024 presidential and vice presidential debates. Although there has been some discussion of women's issues, such as sexual violence, maternal mortality rates, and equal access to education, the discussion is still not in-depth and comprehensive. Data shows that topics related to women are rarely mentioned in the vision and mission documents of the presidential candidates, reflecting a lack of priority on essential issues facing Indonesian women. Without attention and real action from the elected presidential and vice presidential candidates, women in Indonesia will continue to face discrimination and inequality in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and welfare. Therefore, the next government needs a strong commitment to address this issue comprehensively and sustainably.

The theoretical implications of this article suggest that attention to women's issues in political debates can enrich the literature on gender equality and political participation and highlight gaps in the political literature that require more attention. Practically, this article emphasizes the need for the government and presidential and vice-presidential candidates to focus more on women's issues in their policies, including improving education and employment for women, protection from violence, and ensuring maternal and child health. The government must ensure that programs promised in the campaign are implemented and monitored closely and improve public education on gender equality to reduce stereotypes and discrimination. In doing so, it is hoped that a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in Indonesia can be created, which in turn will accelerate the country's social and economic development.

This study is limited by a qualitative approach that may cover only some of the spectrum of public opinion, and the data used is only from documented sources, so that some cases may be unreported. This study also did not involve direct surveys of voters or debate participants, and its focus was only on the 2024 presidential candidate debate in Indonesia, so the results are difficult to generalize. For further research, it is recommended to use mixed methods with surveys and in-depth interviews and expand the scope by comparing women's issues in political debates across countries and using social media data to capture public discussions in real time. This approach will provide more holistic and practical recommendations for improving gender equality and protecting women's rights.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

MOH is responsible for conceptualization, design, analysis, and writing and responsible for data analysis. IP is responsible for interpreting the research results, collecting data in the media and journals, and reviewing the manuscript.

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