

Political Expressionism of Women Politicians Amidst the Discourse of the Patriarchal Paradox

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ABSTRACT

The barriers in expressing political missions for women politicians are due to the dominance of patriarchal structures. This article aims to discuss the dialectic of political expressionism of Banten women politicians amidst the paradox of patriarchy in the organization of political parties and their existence in parliament. Political expressionism is a perspective that attempts to describe the expression of political attitudes and ideas that tend to be emotional and reflective. Therefore, the political expressionism of women politicians is an expression of sentimental political attitudes and ideas of women politicians due to the mental pressure of double burdens, gender discrimination and symbolic violence. A qualitative approach with a transcendental phenomenological is used to explain the "common meaning of their lived experience" of 12 women politicians (Party chairpersons, members of the provincial and district/city DPRD, and legislative candidates who failed to be elected). We use coding analysis of Creswell's phenomenology specifically epoche, significant statement, meaning unit, textural and structural description. The findings of this research are: **First**, women politicians are able to provide new meanings and values in political dynamics based on the manifestation of their political expressionism. The focus of the political expression of women politicians in Banten are four forms, namely resistance, conformity, existence, dan subservience; **Second**, the models of patriarchal paradox that makes women subordination, violence and double burdens (face the dilemma of dual identity in the public and domestic spheres), are successfully negotiated by the struggle of women politicians through authentic communication and expression strategies that increase the legitimacy of the role of women politicians. This research contributes to the development of political science through the combination with the discipline of art "expressionism" and a gender perspective in dissecting the power relations between the existence of women politicians and the discourse of the patriarchal paradox.

Keywords: Women Politicians, Political Party, Political Expressionism, Patriarchal Paradox, Gender Equality

INTRODUCTION

Women politicians in Indonesia face a number of obstacles in expressing their political mission (Kroeber, 2021; Mayrudin et al., 2022a, 2025; Ruprecht & Zumbunn, 2025; Wulandari et al., 2023). Significant challenges stem primarily from political party structures that perpetuate patriarchal culture. However, according to Beetham, political equality is one of the main conditions for democracy (Bassiouni & Beetham, 1998). Apparently, strong support for more participation of women in politics can support for gender quotas and other legal measures for gender parity in politics (Toshkov & Cretti, 2024). But, gender inequality in politics and government has led to a series of political discrimination and symbolic violence against women politicians (Aula, 2023; Mayrudin et al., 2025). They often face obstacles in freely and openly expressing their aspirations and views. For women politicians, this phenomenon takes on an additional layer of complexity due to gender norms and social expectations that dictate how women should behave in the public sphere (Arat, 1989a; Azmy & Ambarwati, 2024; Baker & Palmieri, 2021). Gender mainstreaming and women's political existence in political institutions are facing new resistance in the wave of opposition to gender equality, namely the challenge of the patriarchal paradox to the realization of affirmative action policies (Caravantes et al., 2024).

The policies in political parties are dominated by patriarchal norms that place women in a subordinate position (Charles et al., 2023; Damayanti et al., 2024). Therefore, they must fight hard to gain space and recognition in the political decision-making process. Parties have complied with national regulations in formally fulfilling quota obligations by including a minimum of 30% women legislative candidates (Anwar et al., 2025; Sudarsono, 2024). However, women are placed in less strategic positions on the ballot (not in the top three), thus reducing their chances of being elected. A comprehensive study of women's representation in Indonesia highlights this issue as a major structural obstacle (Aspinall et al., 2021).

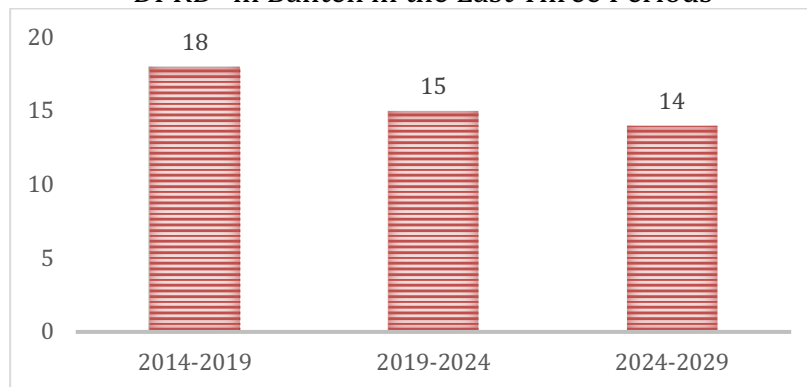
These structural barriers have cascaded into ongoing obstacles. Women politicians often face difficulties in carrying out expensive political activities in today's consumerist age. Transactional, practical politics has placed financial factors as a significant practical obstacle for women politicians seeking legislative office (Gumelar et al., 2021). Women politicians tend to have less access to campaign finance than men, making it difficult for them to compete in high-cost elections (Harahap et al., 2023). A multisite evaluation of women candidates in the 2019 elections found that one of the most consistent structural barriers was limited access to financial resources and local networks. Women politicians who do not come from powerful political dynasties tend to struggle to raise sufficient campaign funds. This results in their chances of winning significantly lower than male or women candidates from dynasties who possess sufficient economic and political capital (Aspinall et al., 2021).

This isn't just an individual issue, but also a related issue to party recruitment practices, a culture of political financing, and an unbalanced and destructive image-building competition. While digital platforms now offer affordable channels for women's political expression, the effectiveness of digital campaigning remains dependent on capital to finance quality content production, a media management team, paid advertising for broader reach, and the necessary equipment (Restu et al., 2025). Women political candidates who lack resources are forced to rely on organic reach, which is not always adequate and actually limits the visibility of their message in front of voters (Prihatini, 2020). Technological liberalization alone does not automatically eliminate financial barriers. Capital is still needed to "revitalize" women's political expression in digital media. Women politicians, once again faced with limited resources, are still less able to express policy narratives or leadership images competitively.

Let's examine the phenomenon of women in politics in Banten. The political presence of women politicians in Banten Province has seen ups and

downs. This decline is due to the declining trend of women representation in the Banten Provincial Legislative Council (DPRD). See the illustration below:

Figure 1. Number of Women Politicians Who Became Members of the "DPRD" in Banten in the Last Three Periods



Source: (Processed by the authors from the KPUD-DPRD of Banten websites)

Based on the figure, there has been a decline in the representation of women politicians in the Banten Provincial DPRD. In the 2014-2019 period, women politicians won 18 seats. However, in the 2019-2024 period, they only secured 15 seats. Unfortunately, this decline continued in the 2024-2029 period, with only 14 seats in the Banten Provincial DPRD.

However, in the last two decades, this area has been able to be occupied by women politicians at the regional leadership level, both provincial and district/city. Indonesia's first women governor, Ratu Atut Chosiyah (2007-2015), emerged amidst a patriarchal culture in Banten's society and politics (Mayrudin et al., 2022b). This marked a significant milestone in the development of women politicians. Subsequently, women regional heads emerged in several regions. South Tangerang Mayor (Airin Rachmi Diany – 2011-2021), Serang Regent (Ratu Tatu Chasanah – 2016-2025), Pandeglang (Irna Narulita – 2016-2025), Lebak (Iti Octavia Jayabaya – 2014-2023), Cilegon Deputy Mayor (Ratu Ati Marliati – 2019-2021) (Mayrudin et al., 2023a), Serang Regent (Ratu Rachmatuzakiyah – 2025-2030), Tangerang Deputy Regent (Intan Nurul Hikmah – 2025-2030) have all made significant strides in women's political careers. This phenomenon continues in other

areas of power, such as women politicians becoming Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of the Regency/City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). Women politicians have also held the position of chairperson of regional political parties (Nurrohman et al., 2023a), see table 1.

Table 1. The Women Politicians Who Serves as the Leader of Political Parties in the Banten Region

No	Name of Politician	Position	Period	Political Party	Level
1	Iti Octavia Jayabaya	Chairman of DPD	2021-2026	Democrat Party	Banten
2	Ratu Tatu Chasanah	Chairman of DPD I	2015-2025	Golkar Party	Banten
3	Irna Narulita	Chairman of DPW	2025-2030	PAN	Banten
4	Ida Hamidah	Secretary of DPW	2026-2031	PPP	Banten
5	Annisa M. Mahesa	Secretary of DPD	2024-2029	Gerindra	Banten
6	Nuraeni	Chairman of DPC	2022-2027	Democrat Party	Serang City
7	Ratu Ria Maryana	Chairman of DPD II	2015-2025	Golkar Party	Serang City
8	Siti Masrifah	Chairman of DPD	2024-2029	NASDEM	South Tangerang
9	Airin Rachmi Diany	Chairman of DPD II	2020-2025	Golkar Party	South Tangerang
10	Li Claudia Chandra	Chairman of DPC	2017-2022	Gerindra	South Tangerang
11	Muthmainnah	Chairman of DPC	2020-2025	PKB	South Tangerang
12	Ida Rosida Lutfi	Chairman of DPC	2017	PDI-Perjuangan	Serang Regency
13	Intan Nurul Hikmah	Chairman of DPD II	2025-2030	Golkar	Tangerang Regency
14	Theresia Megawati	Chairman of DPD	2020-2025	PSI	Tangerang City
15	Ratu Ati Marliati	Chairman of DPD II	2020-2030	Golkar	Cilegon
16	Alya Sabrawi	Chairman of DPD	2016-2020	NASDEM	Cilegon
17	Juwita Wulandari	Chairman of DPC	2020-2025	PDI-Perjuangan	Lebak
18	Neng Siti Julaiha	Chairman of DPC	2016-2026	PPP	Lebak
19	Annisa Anastasia	Secretary of DPC	2020-2025	PKB	Lebak
20	Adde Rosi K.	Chairman of DPD II	2025-2030	Golkar	Lebak
21	Aan Karnamah	Chairman of DPC	2020-2025	PERINDO	Pandeglang

Source: (Processed by the authors from the several media)

Besides that, the Regional Secretary of the Banten Provincial Government and the regional police chief have also been held by women actors. Women figures at the top of regional leadership have become the new norm, no longer a taboo topic to be debated (Hamid, 2010; Widyastuti & Listyaningsih, 2013). These facts confirm that Banten is a meaningful location for studying patriarchy and women's political expressionism.

Furthermore, amidst the challenges and opportunities for women politicians to successfully achieve formal positions in Banten, an interesting question remains. How are women politicians in Banten able to demonstrate political expressionism amidst the growing discourse of patriarchal paradoxes? How will women politicians' interpretations of party structures

and societal cultures that give rise to patriarchal paradoxes influence their political expressionism? We have a preliminary assumption that women politicians can counter the threat of patriarchal paradoxes through the manifestation of their political expressionism which is clever at ensuring gender mainstreaming in their party and parliamentary activities and policies.

A discussion on the space for expression and opportunities for women politicians to develop is warranted. The challenges of patriarchy not only limit women's roles in politics but also influence how they express themselves. They often face social and cultural pressures that require them to conform to traditional gender norms, which hinders their courage and freedom to express their opinions (Wulandari et al., 2023). As a result, women's political expression is often diminished and does not reflect their full potential as political actors. Observed from the nature of its struggle, this movement emerged and developed as a form of awareness to catch up and fight the injustices gained by women (Situmorang, 2013; Susanto, 2015). However, studies or research on women's movement activism (Bereni & Revillard, 2019; Tong, 1998; Young, 1990) began to develop in various scientific disciplines and national contexts in several countries at the end of the 20th century. The study (Bryan et al., 2021; Burkinshaw & White, 2020; Carli & Eagly, 2001; Johnston & Houston, 2018; Susanto, 2015) aimed to uncover the challenges in achieving gender equality amidst a patriarchal culture. Furthermore, study (Gauder, 2015; Nimrah dan Sakaria, 2015) began to discuss the existence of women in the political sphere. Then, more progressive study examined the paradox of the political existence of women politicians (Epiphania Rnh et al., 2025; Mayrudin et al., 2023b, 2025). However, the complexity of women politicians' resistance through their political expressionism amidst the paradoxical discourse of patriarchy has not been addressed by previous researchers. Therefore, the research gap in this paper is the political struggle through political expressionism of women politicians against the discourse of patriarchal paradox of that is detrimental to their political existence.

Within the framework of political expressionism is important to understand that expression is not merely verbal communication or actions, but also a form of identity and power. We argue that women politicians in Banten exercise meaningful political agency despite patriarchy and resist the “patriarchal paradox” discourse that consistently hinders their political works in realizing gender equality in Banten through their political expressionism. Political expressionism is a perspective that attempts to describe the expression of political attitudes and ideas that tend to be emotional and reflective. Therefore, the political expressionism of women politicians is an expression of sentimental political attitudes and ideas of women politicians due to the mental pressure of double burdens, gender discrimination and symbolic violence. Political expressionism reflects how individuals or groups assert their right to participate in the political process and voice their interests. Political expressionism is a form of resistance to oppressive structures and an attempt to gain recognition and justice (Wiratraman, 2021).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a transcendental phenomenological approach to understand and explore the essence of the lived experiences of key informants (Creswell & Poth, 2018), namely women politicians, regarding their struggle for political expressionism amidst the paradoxical discourse of patriarchy that is intertwined and detrimental to them. Purposive sampling is used to determine the criteria for informants such as holding important positions in the party (as chairperson, at least administrators), being a member of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) at the provincial or district/city level, or having been a legislative candidate but failed or not yet elected. They are able to articulate their experiences as women politicians amidst the organization of political parties and the dynamics of a patriarchal parliament. The following table presents the research informants:

Table 2. Research Informants

No	Name	Party	Level	Profile in Party
1	Encop Sopia	Gerindra Party	Banten Province	Member of the Banten Provincial DPRD from the Gerindra (2019-2029)
2	Rika Kartikasari	Nasdem Party	Banten Province	Member of the Banten Provincial DPRD from the Nasdem Party (2024-2029)
3	Emuy Mulyanah	PDI-Perjuangan	Banten Province	Member of the Banten Provincial DPRD from the PDI-P (2024-2029)
4	Ratu Amalia	Golkar Party	Banten Province	Member of the Banten Provincial DPRD from the Golkar Party (2024-2029)
5	Ratu Dewi Larasati	PAN	Cilegon City	Chairman of PUAN - PAN of Cilegon City (Legislative candidate 2024-2029)
6	Qoidatul Sitta	PKS	Cilegon City	Member of the Cilegon City DPRD from the PKS faction (2014-2029)
7	Riska Arianti	PKS	Cilegon City	PKS Politician of Cilegon City (Legislative candidate 2024-2029)
8	Nuraeni	Democrat Party	Serang City	Chairman of the "Demokrat" Party Branch of Serang City (2022-2027)
9	Erna Yulawati	PKS	Serang City	Member of the Serang City DPRD from the PKS faction (2024-2029)
10	Heni Sulastri	Democrat Party	Serang City	Member of the Serang City DPRD from the Democratic Party (2019-2029)
11	Ratna Ambarwati	Golkar Party	Serang Regency	Golkar Party Politician (Legislative candidate 2024-2029)
12	Neng Siti Julaiha	PPP	Lebak Regency	Chairman of the PPP DPC Lebak Regency (2021-2026)

Source: (Processed by the authors)

Primary research data was obtained through in-depth interviews recorded via mobile phone -lasting approximately one to two hours- and transcribed as part of collecting significant statements and uncovering meaningful units. Literature and documentation studies served as secondary data to strengthen and refine the research ideas and findings.

The analysis technique was based on Creswell's phenomenological analysis coding, which was systematically conducted starting from the "epoche" practice. We as researchers had to suspend all assumptions, prior knowledge, and personal prejudices regarding key informants' understandings in order to hear how they truly experienced the tension between their gender identity and the stigma of the patriarchal paradox. We identified *significant statements* based on the coding of "political expressionism," encompassing expressions of "courage or fear" and "freedom or compulsion." We grouped these statements into "*meaning units*", consisting

of thematic interpretations of resistance-conformity and existence-subservience. Then, we provided a *textural description* of the articulation of the women politicians' explicit experiences regarding these four themes within the discourse of the patriarchal paradox. The *structural description* was used to develop a structural framework that allows for the political expressionism of women politicians in Banten to be experienced.

To manage research bias, we conducted member checking by confronting the data with each member of the researchers team, field research assistants, several informants, and the team of experts in the field of gender and politics. Furthermore we declare that the research and writing of this article adhere to the principles of research and academic ethics that are standard for scientific publications.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Experiences and Activism of Women Politicians

The informants shared the range of experiences and activism as politicians. These two factors shape the meaning of political expressionism for them. The length of experience of the women politician informants varied. The women politicians considered political activity as a political and social activity, while also fulfilling their roles as wife and mother within their families. Several women politicians, such as Neng Julaiha (PPP), Erna Yuliawati (PKS), Nuraeni (Democrat), Qoidatul Sitta (PKS), Riska Arianti (PKS), Ratu Dewi (PAN), and Heni Sulastri (Democrat) emphasized their voluntary political involvement in their political parties and parliament. Meanwhile, other informants, such as Ratu Amalia (Golkar) and Rika Kartikasari (Nasdem), were more influenced by their political family backgrounds. Ratna Ambarwati (Golkar) was invited by senior politicians to build networks.

Women politicians' activism are often carried out through political parties (Nurrohman et al., 2023a) and parliament. All informants believe that political parties are important and effective political channels for advancing women's aspirations. As Ratu Dewi Larasati, a PAN cadre in Cilegon, observed:

*“We don't need to be afraid of politics, afraid of joining a political party. Why? Because, as I said earlier, by joining a political party, by being involved in politics, at least **our aspirations will be conveyed, what we want to convey, what we want to be heard by the Councils there, through us**” (Ratu Dewi Larasati, 12 July 2025).*

In parties, women politicians can meet, interact, and build social networks with many parties (Dewi et al., 2018). They are more likely to manage political missions that address interests or issues related to gender mainstreaming. The primary requirement for them to contribute to a political party is to become the core member of its leadership. Therefore, women politicians need to be included in party structures in strategic areas. Nuraeni, Chair of the Democratic Party's “Serang City” stated, *“If we truly want **to pay attention and support women and children**, this issue should be brought to the attention of all ministries [regional government agencies]”* (Interview, 13 July 2025). Not only in the women's and children's empowerment department, women politicians can also fill other positions such as secretary, treasurer, head of logistics, head of campaign, and head of human resource management.

Joining a political party's board and actively carrying out its duties will provide a valuable opportunity to pursue other roles in the current year and subsequent periods. Women politicians acknowledge that patriarchal dominance persists and has an impact on political parties at the regional level. They sometimes face male leaders during debates at important meetings. Qoidatul Sitta, a member of the Cilegon city DPRD from the PKS expressed the opinion, *“The importance of women's political education is that there must be regulations so that **they dare to speak up and express their opinions.**”* (Interview, 26 July 2025). Women politicians may lose influence in voting decisions due to their smaller numbers compared to men. Although women politicians have fought hard to ensure that pro-women policies are adopted by political parties, their efforts have failed due to the narrative of women being submerged in male dominance (Sudarsono, 2024). Let's take a closer look at the obstacles faced by women politicians:

Table 3. Matrix of obstacles experienced by women politicians

Name / Type of Obstacle	Subordination	Double burden	Violence
Encop Sopia	Has experienced	Has experienced	-
Rika Kartikasari	Has experienced	Has experienced	-
Emuy Mulyanah	Has experienced	Has experienced	-
Ratu Amalia	Has experienced	Has experienced	Has experienced
Ratu Dewi Larasati	Has experienced	Has experienced	-
Qoidatul Sitta	Has experienced	Has experienced	-
Riska Arianti	Has experienced	Has experienced	-
Nuraeni	Has experienced	Has experienced	Has experienced
Erna Yulawati	Has experienced	Has experienced	-
Heni Sulastri	-	Has experienced	Has experienced
Ratna Ambarwati	-	Has experienced	-
Neng Siti Julaiha	Has experienced	Has experienced	Has experienced

Source: (Processed by the authors)

Based on the matrix, all women politicians experienced patriarchal barriers in the form of a double burden: attacks on themselves for perceived political careers over family. Nearly all informants felt subordinated, perceived as inferior to men, resulting in their positions often being deprioritized. Furthermore, many of the informants experienced violence in the form of black campaigning, psychological pressure, legal repression, and intimidation for their achievements. These facts confirm that women politicians are highly vulnerable to symbolic violence.

Furthermore, we will discuss the dynamics of the nomination of women politicians as legislative members. After women politicians successfully navigate their roles as active administrators of local political parties, they will be given opportunities in the election candidacy process. Women politicians who are active in party leadership will have the first opportunity and a greater chance of being included on the legislative candidate list in the upcoming election. Indonesian election regulations require a 30% quota on the permanent legislative candidate list in each electoral district (Damayanti et al., 2024; Mayrudin et al., 2023a). This provision will be used by political party administrators as a bargaining chip and as a reward for those who consistently strive to manage their parties. The first opportunity will be given to party administrators who are women politicians. Subsequent opportunities will

allow political parties to request assistance from higher-ranking administrators to send additional women cadres. If this is still insufficient, then it's time for political parties to implement policies to hire or endorse women actors outside of the active leadership as stated by Erna, a member of the DPRD Serang city from the PKS.

This normal and normative legislative nomination pattern sometimes contains several anomalies. Women's legislative nominations can be oriented towards financial ability (Wulandari et al., 2023). Political parties prefer women legislative candidates who have sufficient financial resources to finance their own and their party's campaigns in elections. Furthermore, the process of nominating women legislative candidates is based on family proximity or work networks with the party's general chairperson. This is commonly referred to in literature as patronage, as cited in (Jovani, 2024) Based on a study by LIPI (Indonesian Institute of Sciences), the dominance of party leaders in the selection and candidacy process for legislative candidates in Indonesia is still strong.

Another contradiction lies in the legislative candidate nomination process. Women politicians often face obstacles in the form of policies that restrict them to less strategic ballot numbers, such as 1, 2, and 3. They are often relegated to the middle or lower ranks. Man politicians still hold a strong and dominant position in determining these ballot numbers. Man candidates are more likely to fill strategic ballot numbers. Political party chairmen place more trust in male candidates, whose abilities can be relied upon, than in women candidates (Anwar et al., 2025).

Furthermore, becoming an elected legislative candidate is a great blessing for a women politician. It's unimaginable that, amidst the hegemony of a patriarchal culture and system, a women politician could outperform other candidates. Through their roles as legislative members, women politicians carry out ongoing activism and advance to new heights. In line with this, the following experience was shared by Rika, a Nasdem Party functionary and

member of the Banten Provincial DPRD:

*“When I first became a council member in Pandeglang Regency, I said, I **was always underestimated, either by my seniors or by men.** The same thing happens in Banten Province. But I think this is one of our platforms to prove that **we can be equal in fighting for the people, we can be equal**” (Interview, 30 May 2025).*

They have the authority to engage in the policy-making process at a very high level. As members of the Provincial DPRD or Regency/City DPRD in the Banten region, women politicians can perform the function of gathering constituent aspirations, advocating for the resolution of cases involving women and children, or championing issues that are of interest to women. Some issues that women politicians often champion include domestic violence, women's and children's health, reproductive services for women, work leave for women, and policies to increase women's participation and empowerment in development. Qoidatul Sitta shared her experience if she was given the opportunity by the party to continue playing a role in incorporating gender mainstreaming values into every policy established by the government (Interview, 28 July 2025).

Women politicians as members of the legislature also face similar barriers to expression. Their numbers are far smaller than their male counterparts. The representation of women legislators is even lower than the number of women on political party boards. The mandatory 30% quota for women's representation only extends to the nomination stage. In fact, less than 20% of elected women politicians have been elected, at least in the last two election periods (Aspinall et al., 2021).

Despite this, the political activism of women politicians in championing gender mainstreaming in Banten continues to thrive. They are attempting to fill the media vacuum that has seen little coverage of their political activism. Here are some media portraits of women politicians' political activism:

Figure 2. Media Publication of the Political Activism of Women Politicians in Banten



Source: Compiled from several online news sites

Encop's political activism, which also serves as Chair of the Indonesian Women's Political Caucus (KPPi) in Banten, has led to efforts to continuously increase gender-responsive budgeting (Encop, 2025). Therefore, women's active participation is crucial, ensuring a more comprehensive political landscape and governance with women's involvement.

Women Politicians' Interpretations of Political Expressionism

Expressionism is a school of art that emphasizes the distortion of form and color to express inner emotions reflectively, rather than simply imitating the original form. Therefore, expressionism is a form of self-expression that depicts feelings and inner sensations that arise from personal experiences that occur and are received not only by the five senses, but also by one's soul (Mudeng & Siswanto, 2012; Supardjo, 2012). Adherents of expressionism have the proposition that "Art is an expression of human feeling" (Supardjo, 2012). Thus, political expressionism is a perspective that attempts to describe the expression of political attitudes and ideas that tend to be emotional and reflective. Furthermore, when linked to political expressionism of women politicians, it has the meaning of "an expression of the sentimental attitudes and political ideas of female politicians due to the inner pressure of double

burdens, gender discrimination and symbolic violence.”

In this article, we examine the political expressionism of women politicians, reflecting their expressions of courage, fear, freedom, and compulsion. We examine their significant statements to identify their original meaning units. We categorize expressions of courage into the meaning unit of resistance, indicating that women politicians strive to resist and demonstrate courage in the face of obstacles and challenges. Meanwhile, fear falls into the conformity category, indicating an individual's tendency to adapt to a group in order to be accepted and thus avoid the fear of social exclusion. Freedom falls into the existence category, indicating an individual demonstrates a free attitude in all their activities. Its opposite, compulsion, falls into the subservience category, indicating a person's complete submission and obedience to the wishes of others or to structures that bind them by force. Below we present the results of the analysis of the expressionist experiences of women politicians through a phenomenological coding approach:

Table 4. The Meaning of Expressionism of Women Politicians in Banten

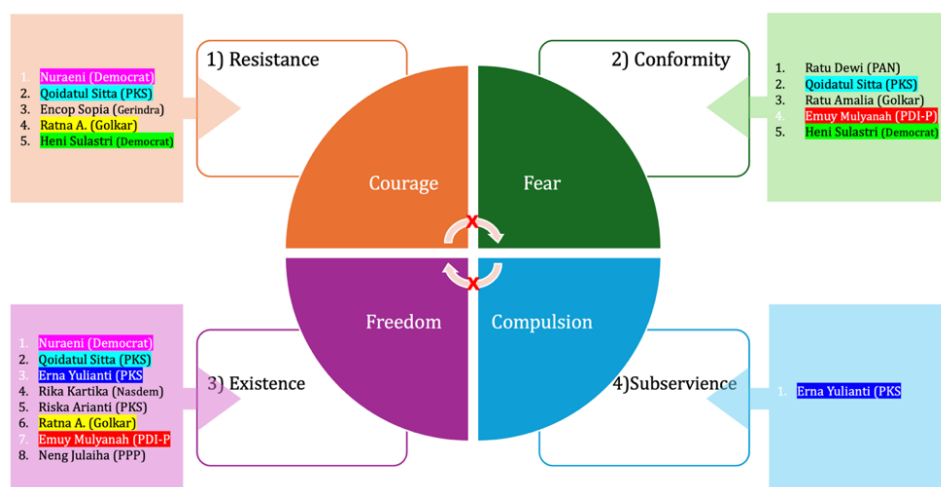
No	Name	Significant Statement	Meaning Unit
1	Ratu Dewi Larasati (PAN)	Expressing it through positive activities, if there's female representation, the approach is more flexible . We shouldn't be afraid of politics. Why be afraid of joining a political party?	more flexible (conformity); shouldn't be afraid (conformity)
2	Nuraeni (Demokrat)	Women's expression is included in the parliamentary management structure to oversee strategic issues concerning women and children. We are critical in overseeing government programs and policies . They only view the budget as a formality, merely fulfilling primary responsibilities related to gender.	critical (dare to resist and freedom of existence)
3	Qoidatul Sitta (PKS)	Political expressionism is defined as the freedom to express ideas, thoughts , and even feelings authentically and honestly, without restraint, within the bounds of religious and state norms . Women must be the driving force for change , voicing women's interests.	freedom (existence) ; within the bounds of religious and state norms (conformity); driving force for change (resistance);
4	Erna Yuliawati (PKS)	Political expression is a response to politics. If a woman has decided to enter politics, she must prepare the capital to make her expression positive, happy, and joyful . Demonstrating this existence is through our abilities.	prepare the capital (compulsion - subservience); expression positive, happy, and joyful (freedom of existence)
5	Rika Kartika (Nasdem)	We can prove that we are equal in fighting for the people.	equal in fighting (freedom of existence)

No	Name	Significant Statement	Meaning Unit
6	Encop Sopia (Gerindra)	Expressing oneself about politics, the presence of women in politics... can enrich state governance policies .	enrich state governance policies (courage - resistance)
7	Riska Arianti (PKS)	We can express our opinions . Both women and men have political rights , including the right to be elected and to vote.	express our opinions; have political rights (freedom of existence)
8	Ratna Ambarwati (Golkar)	Women have played a role in building Banten, not only as housewives but also as active participants in social and political organizations. In my opinion, there is a lack of policies that support women .	played a role (freedom of existence); a lack of policies that support women (courage - resistance)
9	Ratu Amalia (Golkar)	Women are afraid to get involved in politics. Expressing this through positive activities... women's representation is a more flexible approach. Every woman's activity is a must for mothers to support.	afraid (conformity); more flexible (conformity)
10	Emuy Mulyanah (PDIP)	Expressing oneself by involving the community and helping the surrounding residents, no matter how smart a woman is, she really needs men , conversely men need women as a balance.	involving the community and helping (existence); women really need men (conformity)
11	Neng Siti Julaiha (PPP)	So anyone can express their opinions. It's just that people's choices about how they express their political views differ.	choices about how they express (freedom of existence)
12	Heni Sulastrri (Demokrat)	I want to be useful to society, not exploited . Don't let politics become a burden. Just go with the flow. Women must have principles and be mentally strong . Don't get carried away.	not exploited (conformity); have principles and be mentally strong (courage - resistance)

Source: (The results of data processing and analysis by the authors, 2026)

Based on the matrix above, we try to simplify the research findings in the form of an illustration below:

Figure 3. Illustration of the political expressionism of women politicians



Source: illustrated by the authors, 2026

In the illustration in Figure 3, the results of the identification of the meaning unit associations will then be examined through textural description, namely the articulation of the explicit experiences of women politicians regarding the thematic associations of the relational opposition between "courage (resistance) vis-a-vis fear (conformity)" and "freedom (existence) vis-a-vis compulsion (subservience).

The first theme, courage, is associated with the meaning of resistance. Five women politicians fall into this category: Nuraeni, Qoidatul Sitta, Encop Sopia, Ratu Ambarwati, and Heni Sulastri. However, only one, Encop, has a clear, singular position that lacks relational opposition. She asserts her position by stating that "the presence of women in politics... can enrich state governance policies." This demonstrates her as a courageous fighter, not an inferior.

The second theme is fear associated with the conformity category. Five women politicians are indicated in this association, namely Ratu Dewi, Qoidatul Sitta, Ratu Amalia, Emuy Mulyanah, and Heni Sulastri. However, two women are in two positions (in resistance and also conformity), such as Qoidatul and Heni. Qoidatul stated "freedom" (existence) and also "within the bounds of religious and state norms" (conformity). Meanwhile, Heni conveyed "not exploited" (conformity) and "have principles and be mentally strong" (courage - resistance). Then Emuy, who is also categorized as existence but still shrouded in conformity because she emphasizes the idea that "women really need men." The several of women politicians aware that religious constructions have positioned women as followers of the decisions of men as imams (Gustianda, 2024). This reveals the fact that the political expressionism of most women politicians is complex in conveying their political expressionism. However, they try to reduce their fear by demonstrating courage and freedom as political warrior. Furthermore, two women politicians tended to be positioned solely in the conformity category: Ratu Dewi and Ratu Amelia, both of whom shared the same absolute phrase "afraid" and "more

flexible." This suggests that many women politicians still experience fear in their political activities and expressionism.

The third theme, freedom associated with existence, was the most widely identified, with eight women politicians asserting their political expressionism freely and actively. However, it is important to note that five of these eight also held dual positions (Emuy, Ratna, Nuraeni, and Erna), and even triple positions (Qoidatul). Thus, many women politicians remain passionate about fighting for women's rights by seeking to free themselves from fear, subordination, double burdens, and the threat of violence. Meanwhile, three women, Rika, Riska, and Neng Julaiha, tended to have a single position. Rika demonstrated a free political expressionism by stating, "We can prove that we are equal in fighting for the people." Riska mentioned the phrases "express our opinions" and "have political rights." Julaiha then mentioned "choices about how they express themselves."

The fourth theme, compulsion, is associated with the category of subservience. Of the twelve key informants, only one person, Erna Yulianti, fell into this category. She believes that "women must prepare the capital to express themselves." This implicitly suggests that some women politicians feel compelled to submit to the culture and political structures that normalize the need for money or sufficient material resources.

Their expressionism have not been able to produce strategic policies that have a massive impact on increasing women's knowledge and courage in the public sphere. The perspective of women politicians remains limited to the obligation to voice women's aspirations or simply create programs for women to participate in. Forms of expression remain formal and sporadic.

Women politicians expressed the need for formal positions in political parties or state institutions to be able to express themselves effectively. Optimal. For them, positions as regional heads, legislative members, or political party chairpersons are crucial so that their expressions can provide significant benefits to the community. The pinnacle of women

political activism is in the highest positions in organizations that manage resources that influence the people. Women regional heads can issue policies, women legislative members can enact laws, and women political party chairs can recruit more women cadres (Mayrudin et al., 2022b). It's so clear, so simple, and so narrow-minded, based on formal authority in their view. This complaint is based on the empirical experience they've faced.

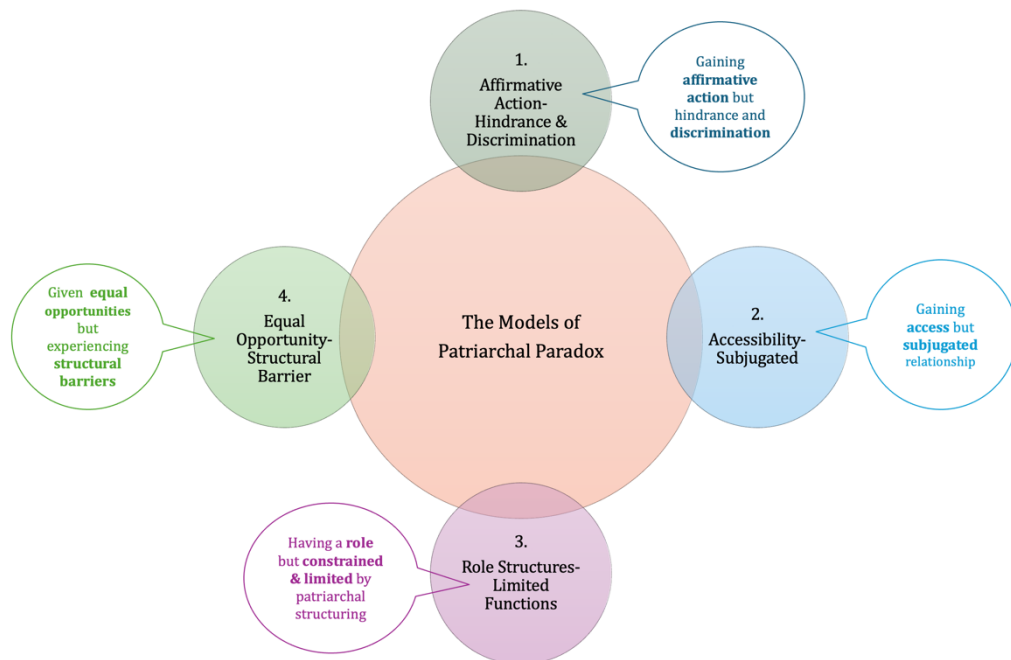
Political Expressionism of Women Politicians Amidst the Paradox of Patriarchy

After explaining the construction of women politicians' experiences of political expressionism through textural coding description, in this section, we will explain coding of "structural description," which attempts to examine the structural framework that enables the experiences of political expressionism among women politicians in Banten amidst the massive discourse of patriarchal paradox.

The embodiment of the patriarchal system positions women as the product of patriarchal paradox (Bower, 2024; Khoiriyah & Mahardhikasih, 2025; Prager, 2020; Verge, 2024). Patriarchy, according to (Benstead, 2021), is a mechanism that maintains gender inequality, which often gives rise to injustice for the women as an individual or in community. Beside that, Bressler (Susanto, 2015) emphasizes patriarchy is a social system that places men as the primary central authority figures in social and political organizations. This statement tends to give rise to the assumption that women's participation in politics and government is limited because public affairs tend to be interpreted as a privileged arena for men. Ironically, post-independence Indonesia and the intensification of the feminist and women's emancipation movements have not been able to fully realize gender equality for women. The concept of the patriarchal paradox -developed by Yeşim Arat- is the perspective on condition of women who are seemingly given space to exist but are actually controlled by men leaders, resulting in discrimination, women are given structural roles, but their functions are constrained and limited (Arat, 1989). Arat revealed that

the construction of the patriarchal paradox emerged and developed merely to build an image of progress for women's roles in the public sphere (Arat, 1989). However, women are presented but they are not actually expected (Mayrudin et al., 2022a; Nurrohman et al., 2023b). Thus, the model of the patriarchal paradox can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 4. Illustration of the models of patriarchal paradox



Source: Inspired by Arat, 1989, illustrated and modified by the authors

First, the affirmative action paradox explains that the affirmative action assure equal participation and representation of women in socio-economic and politics. Paradoxically, affirmative action is clearly not a policy that patriarchal groups are willing to accept. Women in politics experience hindrance, harassment, and discrimination (Arat, 1989). Several cases in Banten clearly demonstrate this paradox model. In the 2024 Banten Pilkada debate, a statement from one of the vice gubernatorial candidates emerged that was considered discriminatory against women leadership by stating that "*women should not be given heavy burdens, especially as governor.*" Airin Rachmi Diany, a candidate for governor of Banten and also the Chairperson of

the Golkar Party's (DPD II) in South Tangerang City, was cited as a candidate for governor. She has received the endorsement and support of two major parties (Golkar and PDI-P), but has experienced misogyny and harassment for her political presence and expressionism from her competitor, Dimiyati Natakusumah, who is a candidate for Deputy Governor of Banten in the 2024 regional elections (sindonews, 2024; radarbanten.co.id, 2024). In addition, Heni Sulastri also experienced discrimination and even intimidation, such as black campaign. In an interview, she revealed that *"if I wasn't strong enough, I would probably be stressed because of the black campaign attacks on me"* (Interview with Heni Sulastri, 12 August 2025)

Another case in the election of Ida Hamidah as Secretary of the Banten Provincial PPP Regional Leadership Council (DPW). She gained affirmative based on the PPP Central Executive Board (DPP PPP) decree, but faced rejection from the incumbent, who refused to accept Ida's replacement. The discrimination and intimidation was blatant and clearly symbolic violence. They refused to allow Ida and her colleagues to enter the Banten PPP office, carrying sharp weapons (*golok*) and intimidating threats. Unfortunately, the PPP leadership in central office failed to respond quickly to resolve the internal conflict within their party. These two cases reveal that the obstacle to political expression by women politicians is the paradoxical patriarchal discourse of affirmative action-hindrance and discrimination.

Second, the accessibility paradox describes how women politicians are given accessibility in politics (political party administrators or cadres, parliament, legislative candidates) but unfortunately their political existences are treated like a subjugated relationship (Arat, 1989). This paradoxical model was experienced by Tia Rahmania, a candidate for the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) from the PDI-P. She received the most votes in the Banten I electoral district, but the PDI-P Central Executive Board (DPP) dismissed the woman politician from the party just before her inauguration and replaced her with a man candidate known to be close to the party

leadership. In this case, a woman politician became 'subjugated relationship' because she as a victim of subordination from patriarchy structure.

Another case is the failure of Nuraeni (Chair of the Serang City Democratic Party Branch) to win a seat in the DPR RI. Nuraeni's access within the party and parliament was very open. However, she experienced ups and downs in representing herself as a member of the DPR RI. During the plenary session of the Banten Provincial Election Commission (KPUD), Nuraeni rejected the vote count and determination conducted by the Regional Election Organizing Team, the KPUD, and the Banten Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Agency). Nuraeni became subjugated relationship of political pressure related to vote disputes and election legal cases at the Constitutional Court.

The two women politicians were initially given easy accessibility both in the management and in legislative candidacy. However, they experienced as people became subjugated relationship in their symbolic and substantive representation due to the strong discourse of patriarchy. Masculine political culture demands that women politicians adapt to be accepted, yet simultaneously, they are required to demonstrate their gender uniqueness as a differentiation of party values (Mandasari, 2023; Muhammad et al., 2021). It is in this context that what is known as political expressionism among women politicians emerges, namely, how women interpret and express their political existence through communication strategies, symbols, and leadership styles amidst patriarchal dominance.

Third, the role structures paradox is a description of the acceptance of women politicians as administrators or leaders in political party organizations, but in reality they are given constrained and limited functions by patriarchal groups (Arat, 1989b). The case of Neng Siti Julaiha illustrates the reality of the role structure paradox. In the 2016 branch meeting (Muscab), Julaiha received the most votes and was elected Chairperson of the PPP Branch Executive Board (DPC) in Lebak Regency. From the 28 PAC votes, she received 17 votes.

Based on that, she actually possesses adequate political capabilities, such as lobbying and negotiation, and is trusted by more than 60% of PAC leaders to organize the *Ka'bah* party in Lebak. Unfortunately, after the branch meeting that confirmed Julaiha's election, the PPP Central Executive Board (DPP) did not issue a Certificate (SK) confirming the woman politician's leadership. Therefore, she reported the matter to the Party Court, the PPP's internal institution that handles internal party matters. She even reported it to the District Court (PN) and the Supreme Court (MA) (kabar24.bisnis.com, 2018). She had demonstrated high political expressionism as a woman politician, but ironically, She is considered to have violated gender norms due to her political behavior which is contrary to the patriarchal paradigm. She revealed that this paradox happened to her and was actually expressed by the current Chairperson of the "DPW PPP Banten" in 2016. Julaiha said that "The Chairperson of the DPW [PPP Banten] has long been condescending... At that time [he] said in Banten, women are not allowed to participate [in recognizing women leaders], because Banten is a religious area."

Paradoxes can arise when women politicians must navigate two pressures simultaneously: patriarchal norms that require them to "stay within their bounds" and public expectations that they appear progressive and inspiring. The stigma of women as "followers" or "complements" remains strong, even among party elites. In such circumstances, political expressionism becomes a tool for identity negotiation: women politicians use body language, clothing styles, moral narratives, even communication strategies and legal channels to assert their capacity (Sofiani, 2021). Here, the political expressionism of women politicians must contend with patriarchal reasoning, which often expects women to project the image of a "good woman," a "responsible mother," or a "stable moral figure." These norms demonstrate the operationalization of the patriarchal paradox. On the one hand, women politicians are enshrined as agents, but on the other, they exploit gender norms that constrained and limited their political expressionism.

Fourth, the equal opportunity paradox in practice emphasizes the political existence of women who are given equal opportunities, but they actually experience structural barriers and gender stereotypes from pro-patriarchal groups (Arat, 1989). The case of Neng Siti Julaiha could also be compatible on this patriarchal paradox model. She faced structural barriers from party leaders at the provincial and national levels who did not approve of a woman's leadership. She also faced gender stereotypes regarding women leadership. In the run-up to the legislative elections, political parties, including the United Development Party (PPP), are targeting and actively inviting women politicians to run. Furthermore, in the case of Airin Rachmi Diany, she initially struggled to gain approval and support from party structures at the central level in the 2024 regional elections. Because the party leadership at the central level preferred another candidate (a man) who was nominated and received support from President Prabowo's party.

Another structural barrier is evident in the management of candidate numbers. We observed that in the Banten Provincial DPRD (Regional Legislative Council) legislative elections, specifically in Electoral District (Dapil) Banten 2, only one political party assigned number 1 to a women politician, the Ummat Party. Meanwhile, in Electoral District (Dapil) Banten 1, two political parties assigned number 1 to woman politicians: PKS and Perindo. This confirms that most political parties and their elites are still entrenched in patriarchal thought. This aligns with Ratu Amalia's statement: "*Parties sometimes only have 30 percent of the vote as a formality. They should be willing to position women in strategic positions, and that should be done through cadre development first*" (Interview with Ratu Amalia, June 25, 2025).

In patriarchal structures, parties often ignore women's perspectives. Although women's representation has increased, their legitimacy within parties is largely derived through expressions of moral and social leadership that re-define participatory politics, rather than solely through quotas (Aspinall et al., 2021). Nuraeni also explained that "*Policies for women and*

children often go unrealized. In my experience, this issue is often overlooked by some, resulting in limited attention" (Interview with Nuraeni, July 13, 2025). Women politicians who champion policies on essential issues for women and mainstream gender equality demonstrate the persistence of moral values within the movements of some legislative members. This makes a significant contribution to increasing legitimacy and positive perceptions of political institutions. The perception that politics is dirty and cruel, even contagious to related formal institutions, can be reduced by the presence of expressionistic women politicians.

Women politicians are fully aware of the numerous patriarchal obstacles they face in expressing their political expressionism, as highlighted in Table 1: Women politicians often experience subordination, double burdens, and violence. However, women politicians choose to continue their struggle. Women's complaints are not drowned out by the hope of compassion from man politicians. Their authentic political expressionism is able to bring clear value to local political dynamics, both in political party organization and in parliament. They focus on policy advocacy for the provision of health services for women and children, support for victims of abuse, and increase women's political participation. Development programs on women's issues and gender equality have become the domain of women politicians, who are more persuasive and expert. This situation has caused man politicians to step back and give women politicians a chance to discuss these issues. Nevertheless, the expressionism of women politicians provides a distinct meaning and value to political parties and their activities in parliament. They are able to bring a colorful political expressionism to their activities.

CONCLUSION

This research contributes to the development of concepts in political science and also government science by integrating the art of "expressionism" with a gender and political perspective. The concept of political expressionism successfully dissects the power relations between the existence of women

politicians and the discourse of patriarchal paradox. We develop the conceptual formulation of political expressionism as a perspective that attempts to describe the expression of political attitudes and ideas that tend to be emotional and reflective. Therefore, the political expressionism of women politicians is an expression of sentimental political attitudes and ideas due to the mental pressure of double burdens, gender discrimination, and symbolic violence.

Our findings confirm that women politicians in Banten can categorize four forms of political expressionism: resistance, conformity, existence, and subservience. Of the 12 informants, eight women politicians asserted an existential position in their political expressionism. One expressed subservience. In fact, women politicians in Banten often experience subordination, double burdens, and violence. Thus, the threat of the patriarchal paradox (in four models: the affirmative action paradox; the accessibility paradox; the role structures paradox; the equal opportunity paradox) can actually be countered by women politicians through the manifestation of their political expressionism, which skillfully colors gender mainstreaming in activities and policies within parties and parliament.

The limitations of our study are: (a) we only focused on the Banten region, thus preventing a comparative review with other regions with different cultures; (b) we were also unable to interview women politicians in the "Tangerang Raya" region and there were still few informants from the Lebak and Pandeglang regions; and (c) because we focused on interviewing and reporting the opinions of key informants (women politicians), we did not explore the opinions of party leaders in Banten, most of whom are men. This study recommends a paradigm shift in research, from identifying obstacles to formulating concrete strategies so that women's political expressionism can occur in a transformative and sustainable manner toward substantive gender equality. And for further research, it can be done comprehensively to investigate the paradoxical practices of patriarchy comparatively between

regions with the same or different subcultures.

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