

# The Vital Role of Women in Overseeing Elections: Maintaining Democratic Integrity

Rosdalina Bukido<sup>1</sup>, Misbahul Munir Makka<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1,2</sup>Institut Agama Islam Negeri Manado

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## ABSTRACT

*This research delves into the multifaceted role of women in policing electoral movements and its profound implications for democratic integrity within the context of dynamic democracies. Elections stand as crucial milestones in determining the trajectory of a nation, embodying the essence of democratic governance. In recognizing women as indispensable members of society, this study explores their inherent potential to actively participate in and oversee the electoral process. Employing a qualitative approach, the research carefully examines various dimensions of women's engagement, including their participation in electoral surveillance, their adeptness in detecting and reporting abuses, and the overarching impact of their contributions on the overall integrity of democratic procedures. The findings uncover the transformative potential of women's involvement, illuminating how their vigilance and dedication serve to fortify democratic systems, mitigate the risks of power abuse, and curb instances of electoral fraud. Moreover, this research underscores the imperative of leveraging women's agency in designing and implementing policies that foster inclusivity and empower them as instrumental agents of positive change in democratic societies. By amplifying the voices and roles of women in electoral processes, this study not only enriches academic discourse but also offers practical insights to inform policy frameworks aimed at nurturing more resilient, equitable, and participatory democratic systems.*

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## Kata Kunci:

Peran, Perempuan, Pemilu.

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## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menggali peran multifaset perempuan dalam mengawasi gerakan elektoral dan implikasinya yang mendalam terhadap integritas demokrasi dalam konteks demokrasi yang dinamis. Pemilu berdiri sebagai tonggak penting dalam menentukan arah suatu negara, mencerminkan esensi dari pemerintahan demokratis. Dalam mengakui perempuan sebagai anggota masyarakat yang tak tergantikan, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi potensi inheren mereka untuk berpartisipasi aktif dan mengawasi proses pemilihan. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini dengan cermat memeriksa berbagai dimensi keterlibatan perempuan, termasuk partisipasi mereka dalam pengawasan pemilu, kecakapan mereka dalam mendeteksi dan melaporkan pelanggaran, serta dampak keseluruhan kontribusi mereka terhadap integritas prosedur demokratis. Temuan ini mengungkap potensi transformatif dari keterlibatan perempuan, menunjukkan bagaimana kewaspadaan dan dedikasi mereka berperan dalam memperkuat sistem demokrasi, mengurangi risiko penyalahgunaan kekuasaan, dan menekan kejadian kecurangan dalam pemilu. Selain itu, penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya memanfaatkan peran perempuan dalam merancang dan menerapkan kebijakan yang mendorong inklusivitas dan memberdayakan mereka sebagai agen perubahan positif dalam masyarakat demokratis. Dengan mengangkat suara dan peran perempuan dalam proses elektoral, studi ini tidak hanya memperkaya diskursus akademis tetapi juga menawarkan wawasan praktis untuk menginformasikan kerangka kebijakan yang bertujuan untuk menumbuhkan sistem demokrasi yang lebih tangguh, adil, dan partisipatif.



**Corresponding Author:**

Rosdalina Bukido,  
Institut Agama Islam Negeri Manado  
Jalan S.H. Sarundajang, Malendeng, Kec. Paal Dua, Kota Manado, Sulawesi Utara 95000  
Email: [rosdalina.bukido@iain-manado.ac.id](mailto:rosdalina.bukido@iain-manado.ac.id)

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## **1. Introduction**

Elections are one of the main footholds in maintaining democratic principles, where people have the opportunity to determine their representatives freely and fairly (Müller, 2021) However, in many cases, the electoral process is vulnerable to various forms of abuse, including fraud, intimidation, and manipulation. To ensure the integrity of elections, effective oversight is crucial (Garnett & James, 2020; James & Clark, 2020). However, in many contexts, the role of women in election supervision is often ignored or minimal (Darcy, 1994; Valdini, 2019). This is due to a variety of factors, including gender inequalities in access to resources, gender stereotypes that hinder women's political participation, as well as a lack of support and recognition of women's contributions to election surveillance (Fraile & Gomez, 2017; Melander, 2005).

The role of women in electoral surveillance and democratization is a relevant subject of study in political feminist theory, which analyses gender roles in politics and the construction of women's political identity (Jones, 1998) The literature on women's political participation highlights factors influencing women's involvement in the political process, including election surveillance (Sabilla & Rahayu, 2023; Wang & Dai, 2013) while the theory of democratization and democratic consolidation emphasizes the importance of active participation of civil society, including women, in strengthening democratic foundations (Jamal, 2012; Keyman & Kanc'i, 2013; Odeh, 2012). Related to this, the literature on election supervision discusses the role of civil society organizations, including women's groups, in overseeing elections, detecting fraud, and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process (Febriyanti, Herlina, & Putra, 2024) In addition, theories on gender inequality in politics highlight the obstacles women face in achieving political equality and efforts to overcome these barriers (Febriyanti et al., 2024; Squires, 2007).

Based on the literature, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of women in election supervision as an integral part of efforts to strengthen democratic foundations that are still lacking in some studies. This research fills gaps in the literature by comprehensively exploring the factors influencing women's participation in election surveillance, their role in detecting and reporting abuses, as well as the impact of their contribution to the overall integrity of democratic systems. The importance of this research lies not only in a better understanding of the role of women in the democratization process, but also in providing a basis for designing more inclusive policies and empowering women as agents of change in democratic societies so that this research can have significant implications for sustainable and equitable democratic development.

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The purpose of this study was to investigate in depth the role of women in election surveillance and its impact on democratic integrity. In particular, this study aims to analyse factors affecting women's participation in election surveillance, including obstacles that may be faced, identify the role played by women in detecting, reporting, and responding to electoral violations, assess the impact of women's contribution to the integrity of the overall democratization process, including their effect on electoral credibility and political stability, and Provide policy recommendations and best practices to strengthen women's participation in election monitoring and promote gender equality in the context of democratization.

## **2. Methods**

The research method to be used in this study is a qualitative approach involving narrative analysis and case studies to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of women in election supervision. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore individual contexts, motivations, and experiences in detail, which are relevant in understanding the complexity of women's participation in election surveillance (Creswell & Poth, 2016) This study also utilized in-depth interview techniques and participatory observation to collect data from female election supervisors and other relevant stakeholders (Sugiono, 2013) Through narrative analysis and case studies, this research will identify patterns, themes, and differences in women's experiences in monitoring elections and their impact on the democratization process (Landman, 2002)

Relevant theoretical approaches include political feminism, women's political participation theory, and democratization theory. Political feminism provides a framework for understanding gender roles in politics and the construction of women's political identity, which is important in understanding the challenges and opportunities women face in election surveillance (Jones, 1998) Furthermore, women's political participation theory helps explain the factors that influence women's involvement in the political process, including in the context of election surveillance. Studies such as those conducted by (Norris, 2011) highlight the importance of understanding the barriers women face in achieving equal political participation. Finally, democratization theory provides a foundation for understanding how the active participation of civil society, including women, can strengthen the foundations of democracy (Ishkanian, 2007) These theories provide an important framework in exploring the complexity of women's role in electoral surveillance and its impact on the democratization process as a whole.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Election Supervision**

Election oversight is often overlooked or faced with obstacles that hinder women's active participation in the political process (Jones, 1998). The importance of equality and accessibility in political opportunity is emphasized in this study, which uncovers how social, cultural, and structural factors influence women's participation in election surveillance. For example, Sweden, where it is often considered one of the countries that upholds the principles of gender equality and political accessibility (Andersson, Johansson, Lidestav, & Lindberg, 2018). The country has adopted progressive policies to ensure equal political participation for women and men, as well as to increase opportunities for all citizens to engage in the political process, including election monitoring (Townes, Karlsson, & Eyre, 2014). To address the challenges facing women, a

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deep understanding of the complexity of these barriers is essential to strengthening integrity and representation in democracies. In this presentation, an in-depth analysis of these barriers will be compiled, ranging from access to political resources to social norms that limit the role of women in politics.

Accessibility and equality in political opportunities play a crucial role in influencing women's participation in election surveillance (Alaydrus, Jamal, & Nurmiyati, 2023). The findings in Indonesia show that women often face barriers in accessing necessary political resources, such as political education and access to funds to engage effectively in electoral surveillance processes (Aspinall, 2014). (Norris, 2011) says there are inequalities in political opportunity driven by male-dominated political structures, where women may experience discrimination or lack of support to engage in election surveillance. The results also highlight the importance of addressing barriers to accessibility and equality in political opportunity as part of efforts to strengthen democratic integrity (Choi, 2019; Freedman & Tiburzi, 2012). By increasing women's participation in election surveillance through increased accessibility and equality in political opportunities, it can be expected that the democratization process will become more inclusive and representative (Darcy, 1994). This can yield benefits such as increased accountability, transparency, and legitimacy in the electoral process, as well as strengthening the foundations of democracy as a whole.

Social and cultural factors play a significant role in influencing women's participation in election surveillance (Jones, 1998). For example, in some countries that still adhere to social and cultural structures that are thick with gender stereotypes and traditional role norms, such as in some countries in the Middle East or in some parts of South Asia, women are often considered less suitable to engage in political activities, including in election surveillance (Moghadam, 2003). Social and cultural contexts coloured by gender stereotypes and traditional roles often become obstacles to women's participation in the political arena, including in election surveillance. In many cultures, women may face pressure from social norms that set domestic roles as a top priority, which may hinder their participation in political activities deemed more suitable for men. In addition, stereotypes about women's ability and competence in political affairs can also affect their confidence to be involved in election surveillance (Norris, 2011). In addressing the social and cultural factors affecting women's participation in election surveillance, it is important to adopt an open and inclusive approach that takes into account the cultural context and existing social norms. This can be done through education and advocacy programs that aim to change people's perceptions of the role of women in politics and promote gender equality.

The barriers faced by women in taking a role in election supervision cover several complex aspects (Alaydrus et al., 2023). *First*, there are structural barriers, such as women's lack of access to the political and financial resources needed to actively engage in election surveillance. This can be due to economic inequality hindering women's access to the same political opportunities as men (L. Kelly, 2019). In addition, there are cultural barriers, such as social norms that require women to prioritize domestic roles and lack of support from the social environment to engage in political activities (Koning, Nolten, Rodenburg, & Saptari, 2013). *Second*, gender stereotypes that limit women's roles and capabilities in political affairs are also a significant obstacle (Fox & Lawless, 2011). All of this creates complex challenges for women who want to be involved in election

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surveillance, and it requires serious efforts to overcome these barriers so that women's participation can be significantly increased in the democratization process.

### **3.2. The Role of Women in Detecting, Reporting, and Responding to Election Violations**

The contribution of women in detecting electoral violations is an important aspect in the context of democratic surveillance. In many cases, women have unique experiences and perspectives that allow them to identify violations that may go undetected by others. For example, women often have greater access to local communities and extensive social networks, allowing them to gain valuable information about potential violations or irregularities in the electoral process (Melander, 2005; Müller, 2021). In addition, women's traditional role as guardians of justice and community protectors can also encourage them to actively monitor the electoral process and report violations they encounter. Women's participation in reporting and responding to electoral violations also has a significant impact in ensuring fairness and the success of the democratization process (S. Kelly & Breslin, 2010). Through the reports of abuses they file, women contribute to the disclosure and resolution of cases of fraud, intimidation, or other manipulation that may interfere with the legitimacy of elections. Women's response to abuses can also encourage quick and effective response action from authorities to address problems that arise (Choi, 2019; Wang & Dai, 2013).

The process of reporting and combating electoral violations by women is core in maintaining the integrity and sustainability of the democratization process. Women who discover election violations often take a variety of actions to report them, from gathering evidence and supporting information to using various communication channels such as election complaint centers or election monitoring agencies. (Drumond, 2015) says, women's responses to such abuses include ongoing monitoring and monitoring of the electoral process, coordination with monitoring agencies or election supervisory bodies, and participation in advocacy to ensure serious handling of reported violations. In addition, responses also included awareness and education campaigns to increase understanding of voter rights and the importance of upholding democratic principles.

The role of women in detecting, reporting, and responding to electoral violations has a significant impact in increasing transparency and accountability in the democratization process (Alaydrus et al., 2023) Through their active role, women are not only guardians of justice, but also agents of change in ensuring the integrity of elections. In detecting violations, (Roviana, 2014) said women often have sensitivity to social and political dynamics at the local level, which allows them to identify irregularities that others may have missed. This contribution is key in exposing these abuses, bringing transparency to the electoral process and preventing manipulation that could harm fairness.

Through whistleblowing, women bring important information to the surface and trigger responses to those violations. This action strengthens accountability, as it opens up space for further investigation and scrutiny of the electoral process. Women's responses to abuses also help urge authorities to act decisively and provide appropriate solutions, creating a foundation for transparency and integrity in the democratization process. In addition, women's active participation in awareness and education campaigns can also shape public opinion that is more critical of electoral abuses, prompting demands for a more open and fair process.

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### **3.3. The Impact of Women's Contribution to the Integrity of Democratization**

Women's participation in the electoral process significantly strengthens the credibility and legitimacy of democracy. Through their contributions, women strengthen the integrity of democratization by bringing diverse perspectives, unique experiences, and sensitivity to fundamental social issues (S. Kelly & Breslin, 2010). This diversity creates more inclusive and representative elections, which in turn increases the credibility of the democratization process in the eyes of the public. Women's participation in detecting, reporting, and responding to electoral violations also demonstrates a commitment to fair and transparent democratic principles, which significantly increases the legitimacy of election results (L. Kelly, 2019). The role of women in strengthening the integrity of democratization also creates a healthier and more equitable political environment. By bringing attention to issues that may be overlooked or overlooked in the political process, women help ensure that the interests of all citizens are well represented in elections. Women's active involvement in educating and guiding voters also helps increase overall voter participation, which is a key foundation of democratization's legitimacy.

The influence of women's participation in minimizing fraud and abuse of power. Women's participation in the political process has a significant impact in minimizing fraud and abuse of power and strengthening the integrity of democratization (Alaydrus et al., 2023). Through women's active involvement in election surveillance, the political process becomes more open and accountable. Women often bring different perspectives and sensitivities to underlying social issues, helping to identify potential fraud and abuse of power that others may have missed. Thus, women's participation ensures that elections are conducted honestly and fairly, thus preventing manipulation or violations that can undermine the integrity of democratization.

In addition, women who are actively involved in the political process strengthen social control over power. By playing a role in detecting, reporting, and responding to abuses, women help suppress corruptive behavior and abuses of power that may occur at the political level. The presence of women in decision-making institutions also brings a more inclusive perspective and enriches discussions, encouraging more transparent and responsible decision-making. Thus, women's participation not only minimizes the risk of fraud and abuse of power, but also strengthens the foundations of democracy by maintaining the integrity of the political process.

The contribution of women in election supervision has a significant impact in strengthening political stability and the development of democratization. With women's active involvement in the supervision of the electoral process, the foundation of democracy becomes more stable as the integrity and transparency of elections increases (Aspinall, 2014). Women often bring different perspectives and sensitivities to underlying social issues, helping to identify and prevent potential violations or manipulation in elections. This diversity creates a political environment that is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the whole society, which in turn strengthens the stability of political institutions. In addition, the contribution of women in election supervision also strengthens the development of democratization by creating a more open and accountable political process. By strengthening social control against abuses and abuses of power, women help ensure that political decisions are taken fairly and in the interests

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of the people. The presence of women in decision-making institutions also brings a broader perspective in political decision-making, creating more inclusive and sustainable policies. Overall, women's participation in election supervision has a positive impact on strengthening political stability and democratization.

#### 4. Conclusion

Election surveillance has a significant impact on the integrity of democracy as a whole. Factors such as political accessibility, socio-cultural barriers, and women's contribution in detecting and reporting electoral violations are important in understanding the dynamics of women's participation in the democratization process. Women's active participation in election supervision not only strengthens the credibility of elections, but also contributes to political stability and the continued development of democratization.

Based on the findings of this study, several policy recommendations and best practices can be proposed to strengthen women's participation in election surveillance and promote gender equality in the context of democratization. The recommendations include the development of training and advocacy programs to increase women's capacity in election supervision, the establishment of policies that support women's inclusion in political decision-making structures, as well as the promotion of gender awareness and capacity building in civil society to strengthen the role of women in the democratization process.

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