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# POLICY PRIORITIES AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION: HOW WOMEN LEADERS SHAPE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines how women's political leadership contributes to democratic development in Indonesia, focusing on the case of Khofifah Indar Parawansa. Despite affirmative action policies, women continue to face structural and cultural barriers in accessing political power. Drawing on feminist political theory and a mixed-method approach, this study combines document analysis with survey data from 608 respondents in East Java. The findings indicate that transformational leadership, inclusive policy priorities, and grassroots engagement significantly influence democratic outcomes, including political participation, transparency, and public trust. Gender-responsive policies, particularly in economic empowerment and social welfare, play a central role in strengthening democratic legitimacy. The study also highlights the importance of social capital and contextual political strategies in navigating patriarchal structures. These findings provide empirical evidence on the substantive contribution of women leaders and offer practical insights for enhancing inclusive democratic governance in Indonesia.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Women's Political Leadership, Democracy, Indonesia, Gender Equality, Structural Equation Modelling, Policy Priorities, Public Perception.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of the New Order administration in 1998, Indonesia's democracy has undergone significant changes (Barker, 2019; Douglas Wilson, 2006; Wieringa, 2007). A key part of this evolution is the increasing participation of women in politics. Women in Indonesia have a rich history of shaping social and political movements (Parawansa, 2005; Susilo et al., 2019; Susilo & Sugihartati, 2019). Figures like Raden Ajeng Kartini and Dewi Sartika played crucial roles in advocating for women's rights in education and public affairs. Political representation was limited until the introduction of affirmative action laws, such as the 30% gender quota for legislative candidates, aimed at boosting women's participation in decision-making processes (Wieringa, 2007).

Notwithstanding these initiatives, women's representation in Indonesian politics continues to be comparatively minimal. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, women held merely 20.5% of seats in the House of Representatives (DPR/ Parliament), indicating ongoing obstacles to gender equality in the political arena. This disparity is a cause for concern, especially when compared to other Southeast Asian nations, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, where female political engagement is more entrenched (D. Miranda-Quibot et al., 2020; Udani & Lorenzo-Molo, 2013). Structural obstacles, societal attitudes, and the prevalence of patriarchal political networks persist in obstructing the advancement of women politicians.

A significant barrier women encounter in politics is the entrenched societal belief that men generally occupy leadership positions (Collins, 2006; Mackay, 2008; Mansbridge, 1999; O'Neill et al., 2016; Paxton & Kunovich, 2003). Gender discrimination, inequitable access to political resources, and challenges in reconciling political careers with cultural expectations exacerbate their path. Moreover, political parties frequently fail to offer sufficient support or chances for women to progress within their organizations, constraining their capacity to compete for senior posts.

In this context, influential women politicians like Khofifah Indar Parawansa (KIP) play a crucial role in reshaping the political scene and challenging established norms. As the Governor of East Java, Khofifah has demonstrated strong leadership, strategic planning, and a commitment to democratic governance. Her leadership in the 2024 East Java election provides a significant case study for understanding the contributions of women politicians to democratic progress. This study explores the significant political influence of women

by examining their leadership styles, policy priorities, and public perceptions.

Research Questions:

1. How does the leadership of women politicians, particularly Khofifah Indar Parawansa (KIP), contribute to the development of democracy in Indonesia?

2. What key factors influence their effectiveness in promoting democratic values and governance?

Islamic values, decentralized governance, and democratic processes influence Indonesia's political landscape, presenting substantial potential and problems for women leaders. Indonesia is the world's largest democracy with a Muslim majority, reconciling reformist Islam with patriarchal customs. Although Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah profess support for gender equality, local factions generally prohibit women's participation in politics. Khofifah Indar Parawansa resolves this dichotomy by strategically collaborating with Islamic networks, such as Muslimat NU, to establish legitimacy while advocating for progressive initiatives like women's economic empowerment (Dewi, 2017). This approach utilizes religious social capital to advance feminist objectives in culturally attuned environments (Rinaldo, 2014).

Decentralization post-1998 reinforced male-dominated patronage networks while creating regional leadership opportunities for women in Indonesia. Decentralization empowered local governments, enabling women to bypass national party structures and engage directly with the populace. Regional power structures are occasionally governed by elites that have animosity towards women. Khofifah's tenure as governor of East Java, Indonesia exemplifies how women can surmount these obstacles through participatory budgeting and grassroots involvement (Aspinall, 2019). Her accomplishments demonstrate that decentralization can enable women leaders to establish direct voter connections independent of party structures.

Indonesia's 30% gender quota for legislative candidates presents a paradox for women's political representation. Tokenism—allocating women candidates to untenable ballot positions—has obstructed the policy's implementation, fostering symbolic rather than meaningful participation in national and provincial legislatures (Roces, 2022). Khofifah's tenure as the governor of East Java is an exception from this trend, illustrating how executive positions can confer greater policy influence to women than legislative roles constrained by quotas. Her experience suggests that electoral enhancements must tackle structural obstacles beyond mere

numerical goals, especially the shift from descriptive representation in legislatures to substantive executive authority. The interplay of Islamic sociocultural values, decentralized governance, and gender-specific voting mechanisms create a distinctive Indonesian context that both limits and enhances women's political leadership.

This research aims to illuminate the evolving role of women in Indonesian democracy by addressing these key questions. By doing so, it will significantly contribute to the existing literature on gender and politics. The study will provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance women's representation and effectiveness in political leadership. Furthermore, this research will analyse Khofifah's political journey, policy measures, and public reception to underscore the importance of inclusive government in strengthening democratic institutions.

This study contributes to the literature by examining women's political leadership in a decentralized democratic context, with a specific focus on executive leadership at the subnational level. By integrating leadership theory, feminist political theory, and social capital, the study provides a comprehensive framework to understand how women leaders influence democratic development. The use of a mixed-method approach further enables a more robust analysis of both structural and perceptual dimensions of political leadership.

This study aims to examine the role of women's political leadership, particularly Khofifah Indar Parawansa, in shaping democratic development in Indonesia. The study aims to:

1. Analyse the leadership style and policy priorities of Khofifah and their impact on democratic governance in East Java.
2. Identify the key factors (e.g., leadership style, public perception, political strategies) that influence the effectiveness of women politicians in promoting democratic values.
3. Explore the challenges women politicians face in Indonesia and how they overcome them to contribute to democratic development.
4. Assess public perception of women politicians and their role in shaping their effectiveness and political acceptance.
5. Provide recommendations for policymakers, political parties, and civil society to enhance women's participation and effectiveness in Indonesian politics.

This study will enhance the literature on gender and politics, democracy, and leadership in Indonesia, specifically regarding women's political participation. The results will yield evidence-based

suggestions for enhancing women's political representation and efficacy. This study will emphasize the significance of women politicians, such as Khofifah, to promote awareness of gender equality in democratic advancement.

The paper aims to offer a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the role of women politicians in Indonesia's democratic evolution, utilizing Khofifah as a case study. This project will enhance academic understanding, educate policy, and advance gender equality in Indonesian politics.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a number of theoretical frameworks that can be used to understand the role of women leaders in the growth of democracy. Feminist political theory, leadership theory, and democratic representation theory are some of the main ideas that are discussed in this section.

### 2.1. Feminist Political Theory

Feminist Political Theory analyses the structural and systemic obstacles that impede women's political participation, highlighting the necessity for gender equality in political representation. Anne Phillips (1995) posits that the inclusion of women in political institutions enhances policymaking by incorporating perspectives catering to various societal needs, including education, healthcare, and gender equity. This theory highlights the significance of affirmative action policies, such as gender quotas, in addressing historical marginalization.

Recent studies provide additional support for these assertions. Paxton et al. (2020) demonstrated that gender quotas in Southeast Asia markedly enhanced women's participation in legislative bodies despite ongoing cultural resistance. Krook and Zetterberg (2017) similarly emphasize that women politicians frequently prioritize social welfare policies, which aligns with Phillips' arguments. Franceschet et al. (2012) assert that women's representation enhances accountability in governance, whereas Haraldsson and Wängnerud (2019) illustrate its association with diminished corruption. Htun and Weldon (2013) highlight the influence of feminist movements in developing gender-sensitive policies.

Feminist political theory gives us a critical way to look at the societal barriers that keep women from running for office and shows how their leadership has the power to change things. At its heart, this theory challenges patriarchal structures that keep women out of places where decisions are made, saying that including them makes government fairer

and includes everyone (Phillips, 1995). Even though Indonesia has laws to help women get into politics, like the 30% gender quota, women still only hold 20.5% of parliamentary seats as of 2019. This difference comes from deeply held traditional beliefs that leadership is a male trait and institutional biases within political parties that keep women from running for office (Dahlerup, 2006). Feminist political theory helps us understand why women like Khofifah Indar Parawansa, who do not follow these rules, face unique problems, even though their leadership shows the real benefits of gender-inclusive government.

Drawing on feminist political theory, this research examines how Khofifah's leadership challenges established power structures and promotes democratic principles in East Java. Her emphasis on education, healthcare, and women's economic empowerment illustrates the theory's claim that women politicians frequently favour social welfare programs (Franceschet et al., 2022). This research evaluates her policy accomplishments and public perception to examine the theory's primary assertion: that women's political representation engenders substantial change rather than merely symbolic change. Khofifah's initiatives for gender-responsive budgeting and support for MSMEs correspond with global evidence indicating that women leaders are more inclined to tackle intersectional inequities (Htun & Weldon, 2021). The study examines whether her success can provide a framework for dismantling structural impediments, such as party gatekeeping and voter bias. This analysis also contributes to the evolving discourse of Feminist Political Theory on critical acts—highlighting how individual leaders can instigate systemic change (Krook & Zetterberg, 2021).

This study introduces three major literature breakthroughs. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is used to quantify the relationship between Khofifah's leadership style, policy priorities, and democratic outcomes; a methodological advance rarely used in Southeast Asian gender-political studies. Second, it situates Feminist Political Theory in Indonesia's particular socio-political setting of Islamic norms, local patriarchies, and democratic changes. The study examines women's political acceptance in East Java, a progressive-conservative region. The paper also discusses policy issues, such as how Khofifah's grassroots feminist political praxis reduces hostility to women's leadership. These contributions fill gaps in previous research that generalizes about the Global South or ignores subnational dynamics (Waylen, 2013).

## 2.2. Leadership Theory

According to leadership theory, particularly Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1978), leaders motivate and inspire their people to work together to reach common goals. Transformational leaders like Khofifah are known for their vision, charisma, and capacity to push policy-driven change. Examining how Khofifah's leadership style—characterized by inclusiveness and community involvement—supports democratic government under this paradigm is therefore essential.

Avolio and Yammarino's (2020) new study confirms that transformational leadership makes organizations and governments work better, especially in societies with many different people. Likewise, Wang et al. (2021) discovered that women leaders usually use participative strategies, hence promoting trust and teamwork. According to Eagly and Carli (2022), women's leadership style is more likely to overcome gaps and foster agreement. According to Hernandez et al. (2023), transformational leadership increases public confidence in democratic institutions.

The transformational leadership model Burns (1978) described offers a vital perspective for investigating how Khofifah Indar Parawansa's leadership approach supports democratic progress in East Java. The defining characteristics of transformational leaders are the capacity to inspire and motivate followers, express a compelling vision, and promote institutional change through inclusive and participatory ways. In Indonesian politics, where conventional leadership styles tend to stress hierarchical and paternalistic values, Khofifah's focus on openness, civic involvement, and welfare-oriented policies shows important aspects of transformative leadership. Her method fits current research stressing how female leaders tend to be more cooperative and sympathetic, especially in handling complex social problems and fostering public confidence (Eagly & Carli, 2021). This paper examines how her charismatic, innovative, and grassroots-connected leadership style translates into accurate democratic results like more political involvement and responsibility.

The study also examines how Khofifah's leadership interacts with Indonesia's particular socio-political issues like patriarchal values and opposition to women's empowerment. By using her communication abilities and policy successes to change public perceptions, transformational leadership theory helps to clarify how she negotiates these obstacles. For example, her emphasis on education and women's economic empowerment

tackles urgent community concerns and challenges preconceptions about women's role in politics. Avolio and Yammarino's (2021) thesis that transformative leaders might model different governance paradigms, hence upsetting established power structures, fits this. This paper investigates whether Khofifah's leadership style corresponds with greater degrees of democratic involvement and gender equality in East Java. It employs survey data and policy results, therefore adding to more general discussions on the effectiveness of transformational leadership in developing democracies.

This paper adds various new ideas to the work on democracy and leadership. The study places transformative leadership in Indonesia's unique cultural and political setting, where Islamic beliefs and local customs mix with contemporary democratic aspirations. Focusing on East Java, an area with progressive and conservative constituencies, the study shows how leadership effectiveness changes across socio-cultural settings. Furthermore, the research provides valuable ideas for legislators, showing how Khofifah's tactics – such as leveraging social media to involve young people or coalition-building with civil society – could be used to empower other women leaders. These works fill in holes in current research, which usually ignores subnational dynamics or depends on qualitative case studies lacking statistical support (Wang *et al.*, 2022). This study combines empirical research with leadership theory to increase academic knowledge and offer practical tools for promoting inclusive governance in Indonesia and worldwide.

### **2.3. Democratic Representation Theory**

Pitkin's (1967) Democratic Representation Theory differentiates between descriptive representation, which pertains to the existence of women in office, and substantive representation, which involves the promotion of gender-sensitive policies. This paradigm is essential for evaluating whether Khofifah's leadership results in concrete policy gains for women and vulnerable populations.

Recent research by Childs and Lovenduski (2020) indicates that substantial representation relies on institutional support and intersectional methodologies. Celis and Childs (2021) contend that women politicians frequently encounter a "double bind" that is anticipated to represent all women while manoeuvring within male-dominated frameworks. Mackay (2022) emphasizes that substantive representation enhances democratic legitimacy, while Sawyer (2023) observes its influence on policy innovation.

Democratic Representation Theory, as defined by Pitkin (1967), offers a vital framework for analysing the two facets of women's political participation: descriptive representation (their physical presence in office) and substantive representation (their capacity to affect gender-sensitive policies). In Indonesia, although affirmative action rules such as the 30% gender quota have augmented women's numerical representation in legislatures, the substantive impact remains inconsistent. In 2024, women occupy only 21% of parliamentary positions nationwide, with significantly less participation in municipal administrations. This disparity illustrates what Childs and Krook (2020) call the "representation paradox" – heightened visibility without commensurate legislative impact. This study employs the Democratic Representation Theory to examine how Khofifah Indar Parawansa surpasses symbolic quotas through her administration in East Java, where her educational reforms and MSME development initiatives exemplify substantive representation in practice. The study examines the correlation between her policy accomplishments and enhanced public perceptions of women's leadership effectiveness, evaluating Pitkin's theory that substantive representation validates descriptive representation.

The Indonesian context introduces additional complexities to this hypothesis. In contrast to Western democracies, where studies of representation typically emphasize legislative conduct, Indonesia's decentralized framework endows administrators, such as governors, with substantial policymaking authority. Khofifah's case presents a distinctive examination of the functioning of substantive representation in executive positions inside Muslim-majority democracies. The administration's focus on participatory budgeting and gender-responsive planning corresponds with recent research by Franceschet and Piscopo (2022), which indicates that female executives are more inclined to establish inclusion measures. The study also investigates opposing dynamics, such as conservative backlash or party politics, that may restrict substantive impact despite nominal representation. This research combines survey data on public perceptions with policy analysis to explore a critical question in modern representation theory: Under what circumstances does descriptive representation lead to substantive outcomes in nascent democracies?

This work innovates in three substantial aspects. Initially, it readjusts the Democratic Representation Theory for executive leadership scenarios,

transcending the legislative emphasis prevalent in current literature (Celis & Childs, 2021). Analysing a governor's office instead of parliament illustrates how decentralization alters gender representation dynamics. Secondly, the research presents novel metrics for substantive representation, evaluating policy outputs and their perceived legitimacy among constituents via SEM analysis—a methodological advancement from conventional case studies in this domain. Third, it delineates the "Khofifah Effect"—a phenomenon wherein the observable policy achievements of female executives generate spill over effects, enhancing voter propensity to endorse female candidates in future elections. This finding provides evidence against dominant beliefs in Southeast Asian political science that cultural obstacles inevitably limit women's significant influence (Iwanaga, 2023). The study uses a mixed-methods strategy, integrating statistical modelling of 608 survey responses with discourse analysis of policy texts, thus providing a framework for future research on representation in the Global South.

This study situates Khofifah's situation within Democratic Representation Theory while contesting its traditional applicability. It offers theoretical enhancement and practical perspectives for attaining significant gender-inclusive governance in decentralized political frameworks.

#### **2.4. Social Capital Theory**

Putnam's (1993) Social Capital Theory asserts that trust, networks, and civic engagement enhance democratic participation. Women politicians such as Khofifah utilize social capital by engaging in grassroots mobilization and coalition-building, promoting inclusive governance. Hooghe and Oser (2021) demonstrate that social capital improves political accountability, whereas Lowndes (2022) associates it with women's electoral success. Alexander et al. (2023) illustrates how female leaders leverage community networks to enhance the representation of marginalized voices.

Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 1993) provides a critical framework for analysing how Khofifah Indar Parawansa developed and leveraged social networks, beliefs, and collective norms to enhance her leadership in Indonesia, particularly in East Java. The concept of social capital, encompassing bonding, and bridging, elucidates Khofifah's strategy of consolidating support from grassroots constituents while establishing alliances with political elites and key stakeholders. In Indonesia, where political dynamics frequently involve patronage and informal networks, Khofifah's capacity to mobilize women's

organizations like "Muslimat NU" and civil society groups illustrates how female leaders can utilize social capital to navigate structural obstacles (Törnquist, 2021). This study examines the hypothesis that the strength of Khofifah's social network enhances her electability and promotes greater public engagement in democratic processes, consistent with recent research indicating that gender-based social capital can facilitate more inclusive governance (Holmberg & Rothstein, 2022).

The phenomenon in East Java, where local religious and cultural traditions intersect with political modernity, renders Khofifah's case a valuable study for examining social capital dynamics. Khofifah's extensive engagement with young constituents through social media illustrates the evolution of social capital in the digital age, representing a form of "digital social capital" that remains underexplored in the Indonesian context (Lim, 2023). This study examines the integration of traditional networks, exemplified by Nahdlatul Ulama, with digital strategies to establish an adequate hybrid social capital. The objective was to assess the degree to which social capital influences two primary outcomes: (1) enhanced women's political participation and (2) improved government accountability, a critical measure of democratic development at the local level.

This study presents a novel contribution in two areas. Initially, it presents the notion of "gender social capital" as a distinct variant that incorporates the gender dimension into conventional social capital analysis. This approach remains uncommon in Indonesian political literature. Secondly, research on hybridization strategies of social capital, integrating both offline and online networks, offers valuable insights into how Asian women leaders can utilize social resources in the digital era. The findings enhanced Putnam's theory and offered a practical framework for activists and policymakers to develop interventions to bolster women's social capital in the political sphere.

The impact of women politicians on democracy is examined from several angles in this paper using theoretical viewpoints, hence clarifying the processes enhancing their political leadership efficacy. The ideas are intimately related to the research issue, so enabling a complete knowledge of women's involvement in the democratic evolution of Indonesia.

Theories taken together provide a complete framework (see figure 1) for evaluating Khofifah's impact on Indonesian democracy. While Leadership and Social Capital Theories explain her strategic and

relational approaches, Feminist Political Theory and Democratic Representation Theory stress structural and policy concerns. Their work underlines how much women's political leadership shapes inclusive

government. This synthesis of recent literature guarantees that the study fits with present academic discussion and bases its analysis in empirically confirmed ideas.

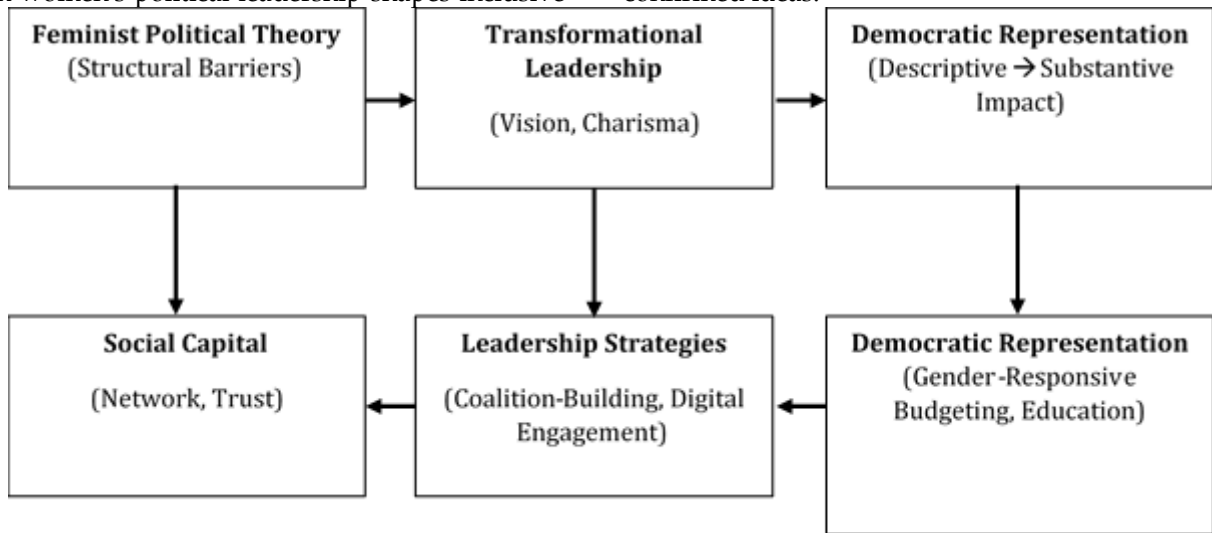


Figure 1: Theoretical Conceptual Model Diagram.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative explanatory design using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to examine the relationships among leadership orientation, political strategies, democratic development, and public perception of women’s political leadership in East Java, Indonesia.

PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for complex models with hierarchical constructs and its robustness in prediction-oriented research.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

A total of 608 respondents from East Java participated in the survey. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure familiarity with regional political leadership and democratic governance processes. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire employing five-point Likert scales.

3.3. Measurement of Constructs

All constructs were operationalized as reflective

latent variables. The higher-order construct Leadership Orientation was conceptualized as a reflective-reflective hierarchical component model (HCM), comprising two first-order dimensions:

- Leadership Style (charisma, inclusiveness, communication, decisiveness)
- Policy Priorities (education, healthcare, gender equality, welfare policies)

Political Strategies, Democratic Development, and Public Perception & Gender Equality were also modelled as reflective constructs.

3.4. Modelling the Higher-Order Construct

Leadership Orientation was modelled as a second-order reflective construct using the repeated indicator approach in SmartPLS. In this approach, all indicators of the first-order constructs (Leadership Style and Policy Priorities) were assigned to the higher-order construct (table 1).

This hierarchical component modelling (HCM) procedure follows the guidelines proposed in contemporary PLS-SEM literature (Hair et al., 2022), allowing for the integration of closely related leadership dimensions into a unified construct.

Table 1: Variables.

Independent Variables (X)	Dependent Variables (Y)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X<sub>1</sub>: Leadership style of Khofifah Indar Parawansa.</li> <li>• X<sub>2</sub>: Policy priorities (e.g., education, healthcare, gender equality).</li> <li>• X<sub>3</sub>: Political strategies and campaigns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Y1: Democratic development in East Java (measured by indicators such as political participation, transparency, and accountability).</li> <li>• Y2: Public perception of women politicians and Gender equality in political representation</li> </ul>

### 3.5. Data Collection Procedure

The analysis was conducted in two stages:

1. Measurement Model Assessment
  - Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability)
  - Convergent validity (factor loadings and AVE)
  - Discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)
2. Structural Model Assessment
  - Collinearity diagnostics (VIF values)
  - Path coefficients (bootstrapping, 5,000 resamples)
  - Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ )
  - Effect size ( $f^2$ )

Bootstrapping was employed to assess the statistical significance of the structural relationships.

### 3.6. Operationalization of Latent Variables

Four observable indicators were applied in order to complete the process of operationalizing the latent variable that was referred to as "Democratic Development" (Y1). The following are the indicators that existed: (1) the percentage of people who vote; (2) measures that measure transparency; (3) audits that measure accountability; and (4) gender parity across all legislatures. Dahl's (2008) interpretation of these demonstrations of democracy is that they are both procedural and substantive in nature. On the other hand, quantitative coding was applied for the data collected from the institutions (such as budget papers), whereas Likert scales with five points were utilized for the survey items.

#### The questionnaire includes:

- Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, education level).
- Section B: Perception of Khofifah's leadership style and policy priorities (Likert scale questions).
- Section C: Views on democratic development in East Java (e.g., political participation, transparency).
- Section D: Challenges faced by women politicians and strategies to overcome them (open-ended questions).

### 3.7. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)

with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive and exploratory research, particularly when dealing with complex hierarchical constructs and multiple interrelated latent variables. This approach is appropriate for modelling leadership orientation, political strategies, democratic development, and public perception within a single structural framework.

The analysis followed a two-step procedure, consisting of measurement model evaluation and structural model assessment. First, the measurement model was assessed to examine internal consistency reliability and construct validity. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity was assessed through standardized indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Collinearity among predictor constructs was evaluated using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values.

Second, the structural model was assessed to test the hypothesized relationships among constructs. Path coefficients were estimated using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to determine statistical significance. The explanatory power of the model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and effect sizes were examined where appropriate.

To address the high empirical association between leadership style and policy priorities, the study modelled a higher-order construct labelled "Leadership Orientation" using a reflective-reflective hierarchical component model (HCM) approach. The repeated indicator method was applied to integrate leadership style and policy priorities as first-order dimensions of the higher-order construct. This approach follows established guidelines in contemporary PLS-SEM literature and allows conceptually related dimensions to be represented within a unified structural framework.

The main components of the revised SEM model are presented in Table 2. The proposed hypotheses and structural relationships are summarized in Table 3, and the overall structural framework is illustrated in Figure 2.

*Table 2: Main Components of the SEM Model.*

Model	Description of Variables
Measurement	<p>This part of the model defines how latent variables are measured by observed indicators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latent Variable: <b>Democratic Development</b>. Observed Indicators: Political participation, transparency, accountability, gender equality in politics.</li> <li>• Latent Variable: <b>Leadership Style</b>. Observed Indicators: Charisma, decisiveness, inclusivity,</li> </ul>

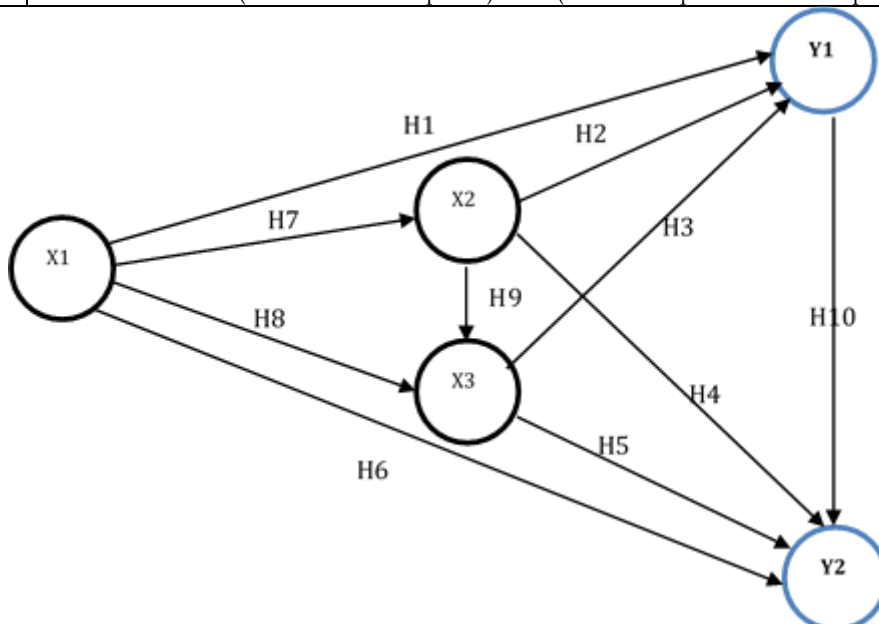
	communication skills.
Structural	This part of the model specifies the relationships between latent variables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Style → Democratic Development</li> <li>• Policy Priorities → Public Perception</li> <li>• Political Strategies → Democratic Development</li> </ul>

Through this modelling strategy, the analysis provides a systematic examination of how leadership orientation and political strategies shape democratic

development and public perceptions of women’s political leadership in East Java.

**Table 3: Hypotheses and Relationship.**

Hypothesis	Relationship
H1	X1 (Leadership Style) → Y1 (Democratic Development)
H2	X2 (Policy Priorities) → Y1 (Democratic Development)
H3	X3 (Political Strategies) → Y1 (Democratic Development)
H4	X1 (Leadership Style) → Y2 (Public Perception & Gender Equality)
H5	X2 (Policy Priorities) → Y2 (Public Perception & Gender Equality)
H6	X3 (Political Strategies) → Y2 (Public Perception & Gender Equality)
H7	X1 (Leadership Style) → X2 (Policy Priorities)
H8	X1 (Leadership Style) → X3 (Political Strategies)
H9	X2 (Policy Priorities) → X3 (Political Strategies)
H10	Y1 (Democratic Development) → Y2 (Public Perception & Gender Equality)



**Figure 2: Variables and Hypotheses Framework.**

Variable X:

- X1: Leadership style of Khofifah Indar Parawansa.
- X2: Policy priorities (e.g., education, healthcare, gender equality).
- X3: Political strategies and campaigns.

Variable Y:

- Y1: Democratic Development
- Y2: Public Perception of women politicians and Gender equality in political representation.

**3.8. Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to internationally recognized ethical standards for research involving human

participants. All respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent prior to participation. The survey was conducted anonymously, and no personally identifiable information was collected.

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1. Results**

The SEM results reveal significant positive relationships between leadership style (X1), policy priorities (X2), and democratic development (Y1). In addition, democratic development (Y1) is significantly associated with public perception and gender equality (Y2), indicating a sequential

relationship between governance outcomes and societal legitimacy.

#### 4.1.1. Measurement Model

The measurement model was first evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs prior to testing the structural relationships. Internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and construct validity were examined using Cronbach's alpha, factor loadings, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

#### 4.1.2. Reliability

The reliability analysis indicates that all constructs demonstrate high internal consistency. As reported in Table 4, Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.91 to 0.96 across the five latent variables: Leadership Style (X1), Policy Priorities (X2), Political Strategies (X3), Democratic Development (Y1), and Public Perception & Gender Equality (Y2). All values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency among the observed indicators. These findings confirm that the measurement items reliably capture their respective latent constructs.

**Table 4: Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha).**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
X1 (Leadership Style)	0.94	Very Reliable
X2 (Policy Priorities)	0.95	Very Reliable
X3 (Political Strategy & Campaign)	0.91	Very Reliable
Y1 (Development of Democracy)	0.96	Very Reliable
Y2 (Public Perception & Gender Equality)	0.94	Very Reliable

Criteria: Reliable if Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7, very reliable if > 0.9.

#### 4.1.3. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed through factor loadings and AVE values, as presented in Table 5. All standardized factor loadings range between 0.71 and 0.96, surpassing the recommended minimum of 0.60.

Furthermore, the AVE values for all constructs range from 0.69 to 0.81, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.50. These results indicate that a substantial proportion of variance in the observed indicators is explained by their underlying latent constructs. Therefore, the model demonstrates satisfactory convergent validity.

**Table 5: Construct Validity Test (CFA).**

Variables	AVE (>0.5)	Loading Factor (>0.6)	Information
X1 (Leadership Style)	0.72	0.74-0.91	Valid
X2 (Policy Priorities)	0.76	0.78-0.94	Valid
X3 (Political Strategy & Campaign)	0.69	0.71-0.89	Valid
Y1 (Development of Democracy)	0.81	0.82-0.96	Valid
Y2 (Public Perception & Gender Equality)	0.79	0.80-0.93	Valid

Criteria:

- AVE > 0.5 (Convergent Validity)
- Loading Factor > 0.6 (Valid Indicators)

#### 4.2. Structural Model

Following confirmation of the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesized relationships among the latent variables. The overall model fit

indices indicate that the proposed structural model demonstrates satisfactory goodness of fit. As shown in Table 6, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.97) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.95) exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, while the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.048) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.046) fall below the conventional cut-off value of 0.08. These indices suggest that the model adequately represents the observed data.

**Table 6: Test Results Goodness of Fit (GoF).**

Index of GoF	Results	Cut-off	Information
Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	276.42	$P > 0.05$	Fit if not significant
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.97	$\geq 0.90$	Fit
TLI (Tucker Lewis Index)	0.95	$\geq 0.90$	Fit
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.048	$\leq 0.08$	Fit

Index of GoF	Results	Cut-off	Information
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	0.046	$\leq 0.08$	Fit

Conclusion: The SEM model meets all the Goodness of Fit criteria, meaning that the model used is quite good.

The path coefficients and hypothesis testing results are reported in Table 7. All structural paths were statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 7: Regression Test Results SEM (Path Coefficients & Significance).**

Correlation	Path Coefficients ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value	Significance
X1 → Y1 (Leadership Style → Development of Democracy)	0.969	48.54	< 0.001	Significant
X2 → Y1 (Policy Priorities → Democratic Development)	0.905	66.21	< 0.001	Significant
X3 → Y1 (Political Strategy → Development of Democracy)	0.961	47.40	< 0.001	Significant
X1 → Y2 (Leadership Style → Public Perception of Women Politicians & Gender Equality)	0.920	34.84	< 0.001	Significant
X2 → Y2 (Policy Priorities → Public Perception of Women Politicians & Gender Equality)	0.881	45.44	< 0.001	Significant
X3 → Y2 (Political Strategy → Public Perception of Women Politicians & Gender Equality)	0.27	3.22	< 0.001	Significant
X1 → X2 (Leadership Style → Policy Priorities)	1.045	61.66	< 0.001	Significant
X1 → X3 (Leadership Style → Political Strategies)	0.885	46.07	< 0.001	Significant
X2 → X3 (Policy Priorities → Political Strategies)	0.788	46.64	< 0.001	Significant
Y1 → Y2 (The Development of Democracy → Public Perception of Women Politicians & Gender Equality)	0.932	50.31	< 0.001	Significant

Criteria: Significant if p-value < 0.05.

Conclusion:

1. Policy priorities (X2) have the greatest influence on the development of democracy (Y1) and Public Perception of Women Politicians & Gender Equality (Y2).

2. Political strategy (X3) is also significant in influencing democracy and public perception.

3. Leadership style (X1) significantly influences both democratic development and public perception

4. The development of democracy (Y1) has a strong influence on Public Perception of Women Politicians & Gender Equality (Y2).

#### 4.2.1. Direct Effects on Democratic Development (Y1)

H1 posited that Leadership Style (X1) positively influences Democratic Development (Y1). The results indicate a strong and significant positive effect ( $\beta = 0.969$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, H1 is supported. This finding suggests that transformational and inclusive leadership characteristics are strongly associated with improvements in democratic governance at the regional level.

H2 proposed that Policy Priorities (X2) positively affect Democratic Development (Y1). The results show a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.905$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H2. Substantive policy orientations—particularly those related to social welfare and gender-responsive initiatives—appear to play a central role in shaping democratic outcomes.

H3 hypothesized that Political Strategies (X3) positively influence Democratic Development (Y1). The path coefficient is significant ( $\beta = 0.961$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3. This indicates that strategic coalition-building, grassroots mobilization, and campaign approaches are strongly associated with democratic strengthening.

The explanatory power of the model for Democratic Development is substantial, with an  $R^2$  value of 0.955 (Table 8), indicating that 95.5% of the variance in Y1 is explained by Leadership Style, Policy Priorities, and Political Strategies.

#### 4.2.2. Direct Effects on Public Perception and Gender Equality (Y2)

H4 proposed that Leadership Style (X1) positively influences Public Perception & Gender Equality (Y2). The results indicate a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.920$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H4. This suggests that leadership characteristics directly shape societal perceptions of women's political competence and legitimacy.

H5 hypothesized that Policy Priorities (X2) positively influence Public Perception & Gender Equality (Y2). The results confirm a strong and significant effect ( $\beta = 0.881$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H5. Policy performance therefore appears to reinforce public acceptance of women's political

leadership.

H6 proposed that Political Strategies (X3) positively affect Public Perception & Gender Equality (Y2). The effect is statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.270$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), although comparatively weaker than other paths. H6 is supported. This indicates that while campaign and mobilization strategies matter, their direct influence on public perception is more moderate relative to leadership and policy factors.

The model explains 86.9% of the variance in Public Perception & Gender Equality ( $R^2 = 0.869$ ), indicating strong explanatory power (Table 8).

**Table 8: R-Square Test (Model Strength).**

Dependent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Description
Y1 (Development of Democracy)	0.955	95.5% Variance is explained by X1, X2, X3
Y2 (Public Perception & Gender Equality)	0.869	86.9% Variance is explained by X1, X2, X3, Y1

Conclusion: The high R-square values indicate strong explanatory power; however, given the perceptual nature of the constructs, potential common method variance was assessed.

#### 4.2.3. Interrelationships among Independent Variables

H7 proposed that Leadership Style (X1) influences Policy Priorities (X2). The path coefficient is significant ( $\beta = 1.045$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H7. This suggests that leadership orientation strongly shapes substantive policy agendas.

H8 hypothesized that Leadership Style (X1) positively influences Political Strategies (X3). The results confirm a significant relationship ( $\beta = 0.885$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H8. Leadership characteristics therefore play a central role in determining campaign and mobilization approaches.

H9 proposed that Policy Priorities (X2) influence Political Strategies (X3). The results show a significant positive effect ( $\beta = 0.788$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H9. Policy orientation thus contributes to shaping strategic political engagement.

#### 4.2.4. Mediating Relationship

H10 posited that Democratic Development (Y1) positively influences Public Perception & Gender Equality (Y2). The findings indicate a strong and significant effect ( $\beta = 0.932$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H10. This result suggests that improvements in democratic governance reinforce public acceptance of women's leadership and gender equality in political representation.

#### 4.3. Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the argument that women's political leadership contributes significantly to democratic development in Indonesia. The structural model demonstrates that leadership style, policy priorities, and political strategies jointly shape democratic outcomes, confirming the multidimensional nature of political effectiveness.

From a theoretical perspective, these results reinforce key assumptions in Feminist Political Theory, particularly the distinction between symbolic and substantive representation. While previous studies have highlighted the persistent gap between women's presence and influence in politics, this study shows that leadership in executive positions—such as Khofifah's governorship—can overcome this limitation by enabling direct policy intervention. This supports the argument by Pitkin (1967) and subsequent scholars that substantive representation is more likely to emerge when institutional constraints are minimized.

The findings also align with Transformational Leadership Theory. The strong relationship between leadership style and democratic development ( $\beta = 0.969$ ) indicates that inclusive, participatory, and vision-driven leadership enhances governance quality. This is consistent with Avolio and Yammarino (2021), who argue that transformational leaders are particularly effective in complex and pluralistic societies. In the Indonesian context, where political structures are often hierarchical and patronage-based, Khofifah's leadership represents a shift toward more collaborative governance.

In addition, the role of policy priorities emerges as

a critical determinant of democratic legitimacy. The strong influence of policy orientation on both democratic development and public perception confirms that citizens evaluate leadership not only through symbolic representation but also through tangible policy outcomes. This finding supports Franceschet and Piscopo (2022), who emphasize that women leaders tend to prioritize social welfare policies that directly affect public well-being, thereby strengthening democratic trust.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of Social Capital Theory in explaining political effectiveness. Khofifah's ability to mobilize grassroots networks and religious organizations such as Muslimat NU demonstrates how social capital can be leveraged to overcome structural barriers. This confirms Putnam's (1993) argument that trust, networks, and civic engagement are fundamental to democratic consolidation. Importantly, this study extends the concept by introducing the role of "digital social capital," where online engagement complements traditional networks.

However, despite these positive findings, structural and cultural constraints remain significant. Patriarchal norms, party gatekeeping, and unequal access to political resources continue to limit women's broader participation in politics. This supports the argument in Feminist Political Theory that institutional reforms alone are insufficient without broader cultural transformation.

Comparatively, Indonesia's experience reflects a hybrid condition between progress and constraint. While countries such as the Philippines demonstrate stronger female political representation due to institutional support, Indonesia still struggles with effective implementation of gender quotas. This suggests that the success of women leaders like Khofifah is not merely the result of policy frameworks but also individual agency and strategic adaptation to local political contexts.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that women's political leadership in decentralized democratic systems can produce substantive democratic outcomes. The integration of leadership, policy, and social capital provides a more comprehensive explanation of how women leaders navigate and transform political structures in emerging democracies.

#### ***4.3.1. The Role of Women Politicians in Indonesian Democracy***

Khofifah's leadership illustrates the interaction between transformational leadership, social capital, and substantive representation. Her ability to

integrate grassroots mobilization with policy-oriented governance demonstrates how women leaders can translate symbolic representation into measurable democratic outcomes. This finding reinforces the argument that leadership effectiveness is not solely determined by institutional support, but also by strategic agency and contextual adaptation.

This finding indicates that women leaders tend to prioritize socially oriented policies, particularly in education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. In the case of Khofifah, her emphasis on MSME development and improved access to public services reflects a policy orientation that directly addresses community needs. This supports feminist political theory, which argues that women bring distinct policy perspectives that are often more responsive to social welfare concerns. Therefore, strengthening women's political roles requires not only increasing representation but also ensuring institutional support for the implementation of gender-responsive policies.

In practice, the role of the media and a more open political system is a crucial factor in supporting the sustainability of women's leadership in Indonesia. The media has a role in shaping public perceptions of women in politics, where more positive representation can reduce still strong gender stereotypes. In addition, reforms in the political system, such as providing structural support to women candidates and stronger affirmative policies within political parties, are important steps to create a fairer ecosystem for women's involvement in politics. Khofifah's success in building a support base in East Java exemplifies how women can become competent leaders and be accepted by the community as long as there is equal access to politics.

The implications of these findings are not only relevant in the context of democracy in Indonesia but also in the development of more inclusive policies globally. Increasing women's political participation can strengthen democratic legitimacy and result in policies more oriented towards social welfare. Therefore, the agenda of strengthening women's political capacity must continue to be fought through political education, leadership training, and policy reform at the party and government levels. Thus, a more inclusive and representative democracy can be realized, where the role of women is no longer just symbolic but the primary driver of social and political change in Indonesia.

Indonesia's attempt to achieve gender parity in politics contrasts with several ASEAN nations, revealing how political systems and social norms influence women's leadership. With 28% of

parliamentary seats and several female presidents, the Philippines regularly ranks among Asia's best countries for female political representation; Indonesia ranks 20.5% and has no female president. This difference is structural. While Indonesia's patriarchal party structures marginalize women despite gender quotas, the Philippines' party-list system and strong women's movements have increased female candidates (IPU, 2023). Critics say Vietnam's communist system, which has 30% female representation via top-down orders, runs the risk of tokenism without power (London, 2022).

Regional outliers outside ASEAN help to frame Indonesia's issues. New Zealand's 50% female legislators and Indira Gandhi's lengthy history of women leaders demonstrate that proportional representation and social acceptance of women's power can help to remove barriers. Though advanced economies, Japan and South Korea lag below Indonesia in female representation (10% and 19%, respectively), indicating how Confucian gender norms can override institutional changes (World Bank, 2023). These contrasts reveal that Indonesia's limitations are not exceptional or impossible, but they do reflect Islamic norms, decentralized patronage systems, and quota execution challenges. Studying the Philippines' grassroots mobilization and Vietnam's enforcement could help Indonesia to convert its female quotas into actual representation.

#### **4.4. Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, it extends Feminist Political Theory by demonstrating that women's leadership in executive positions can generate substantive democratic outcomes beyond symbolic representation. Unlike many studies that focus on legislative quotas, this research highlights the significance of executive authority in enabling policy influence.

Second, this study integrates Transformational Leadership Theory and Social Capital Theory into a unified analytical framework. The findings show that leadership effectiveness is not only shaped by individual leadership style but also by the ability to mobilize social networks and build public trust, particularly in decentralized political contexts.

Third, the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) provides empirical validation of theoretical relationships that are often examined qualitatively in previous studies. This methodological contribution strengthens the evidence base for understanding women's political leadership in emerging democracies, particularly in

Southeast Asia.

#### **4.5. Practical Implications**

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for policymakers, political institutions, and civil society. First, increasing women's political participation requires more than formal representation through quotas. Institutional support mechanisms, such as leadership training, mentorship programs, and inclusive party recruitment systems, are essential to enhance women's effectiveness in political roles.

Second, policymakers should prioritize gender-responsive policies that directly address social welfare issues, including education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. Such policies not only improve societal outcomes but also strengthen public trust and democratic legitimacy.

Third, political actors should leverage both traditional and digital forms of social capital to expand public engagement. The use of digital platforms can enhance political communication, particularly among younger generations, and help reshape public perceptions of women's leadership.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

The results of this study show that women politicians such as Khofifah Indar Parawansa have a significant role in strengthening democracy in Indonesia, especially in East Java. Her inclusive, welfare-based, and transparent leadership in policy shows that women in politics are not only fulfilling gender quotas but also making a substantive contribution to strategic decision-making. Support from the younger generation and professionals for women's leadership is increasing, reflecting the changing public perception of women's roles in politics. Furthermore, Khofifah's adaptable policies and political tactics show that women politicians can compete and contribute new ideas to the democratic system.

These findings indicate three key points. First, stronger institutional support is required to enhance women's political representation through affirmative policies and political education. Second, women's leadership contributes substantively to democratic governance by promoting inclusive and welfare-oriented policies. Third, expanding women's participation at the national level can strengthen democratic legitimacy and foster a more participatory political system.

It is possible to expand this research to look at how gender dynamics affect governmental and political decision-making processes as well as how

societies react to women's leadership in a broader societal context. In addition, further research can explore the effectiveness of policies implemented by women politicians in the long term and compare them with those of male leaders. A more in-depth

qualitative study with an interview approach or case studies can also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies for the success of women politicians in the Indonesian democratic system.

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