
Anti-feminist Movement, Hegemonic Patriarchy, and Gender Equality Challenges: The Case of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill

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ABSTRACT

Challenges to gender equality in Indonesia are not only related to men and male patriarchy. Using the case of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill, women, specifically those supported by the party affiliated with political Islam, can also hamper the promotion of women's rights and equality. Hegemonic patriarchy explains the phenomenon through relating the rejection against the Bill to the patriarchal tendencies planted through religious institutions and teaching. The teaching that places women as a secondary creature after men and as the object of men's authority (*Imamah*), is taken for granted, believed to be transcendental, turned into an ideology, and concretized through a movement against feminism. All points that try to assert women's fundamental rights in the Bill are coined as Western values and are rejected as seen as anti-Islam. Reflecting from the case, it becomes clear that challenges towards gender equality are currently getting harder, as they come not only from patriarchal men, but also women who are hegemonized by patriarchal values and take an anti-feminist stance as part of preserving Islam. Tracing through secondary and primary sources, applying desk reviews and interviews with male and female activists, both for and against the Bill, this paper identifies that the rise of anti-feminist sentiment is rooted alongside contemporary Islamization, which has mushroomed in the post-*Reformasi* era, and poses new challenges to promoting gender equality.

Keywords: *anti-feminist movement; gender equality; hegemonic patriarchy; sexual violence*

INTRODUCTION

“Currently, there are many organizations and parties that advocate for LGBT and against regulatory articles on morality. On the other hand, they become the main supporters for the ratification of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill without deep and sufficient studies. RUU PKS is not a solution.....” (Aliansi Cinta Keluarga Indonesia (AILA), IG post, 25 April 2019).

The quote above explains the strength of the rejection against the ratification of the Sexual Violence Elimination

Bill. Although as per 22 April 2022 the Bill has been finally ratified, it is important to look back at the debates, providing the strong rejection, even from women themselves. AILA, as quoted above, is not alone. There are at least 190 organizations listed in a press release of groups that rejected the ratification of the Bill. This paper reflects on the refusal of the Bill, including those by women, while on the other hand, the campaign for expediting the process by other female activists was also strong. Using the idea of hegemonic patriarchy, this paper tries to capture the reasons given for rejecting the Bill,

which was said to protect women as it was proposed in the context of the high number of cases of sexual abuse, especially against women and girls. The rejection movement against the ratification of the Bill has made us aware of rising anti-feminism in the current Indonesian context.

The idea of hegemonic patriarchy can be said to have roots in Gramsci's idea of hegemony (1971) and Hunnicut's view of patriarchy (2009), in which hegemony is defined as a way of winning and holding power and maintaining domination, which is perceived and understood as 'normal', 'ordinary', and 'natural' (Donaldson 1993, 645), while patriarchy is a system of male domination and female subordination (Hunnicut 2009, 553). Hegemonic patriarchy, as such, refers to systems benefitting men by controlling women, which are perceived as natural and normal even by the women themselves, as if control by men is something normal (Donaldson 1993, 655).

In the Indonesian context, anti-feminist groups generally come from the group of religious studies (called *liqo'*) which underlines the belief that women are objects with obedience to men. Obedience to men, who are placed as priests or leaders in the family (called *imam*), is a form of worship/*taqwā*. People who claim to be anti-feminists believe that feminism is the result of a Western construction that is not in accordance with family and religious teachings and is contrary to Islamic culture (Feldman 2001, 1102). This anti-feminist group is dominated by fundamentalists who see Islam as a total force that governs all aspects of life from public to private (Moghissi, 1999). Therefore, promotion of women's rights is seen as too liberal and not compatible with the Islamic teaching those women believe.

The emergence and development of this anti-feminist movement in Indonesia, no matter how, cannot be separated from the *Reformasi* era, heightened in the latest two Presidential election periods. It was pushed, especially by the commodification of identity in the Presidential election campaign and enhanced by the development of social media in the country (Azmi and Bachri 2019). *Reformasi* in Indonesia is identical with the political transformation that shifted Indonesia from authoritarian rule to democratic, with the fall of Soeharto as an important token. The *Reformasi* era, in fact, not only allowed the birth and development of reformist groups that support social transformation, such as pro-gender equality, anti-discrimination, pro-minority groups, and so on. The *Reformasi* era, in fact, also encouraged the birth of conservative movements, which revived traditional Islamic teachings and are seen to strengthen men's control

over women (Feldman 2001, 1103). Through what we call Islamization, from the birth of the reformation era to the post-reform era, fundamentalist groups with conservative thoughts have increasingly gained a place in society (Wieringa, 2009).

For a country that is still struggling to promote gender equality, the rise of an anti-feminist movement is seen to enhance challenges for recognizing women's rights. Without being hampered by such a movement, feminists and pro gender equality activists have been burdened with stagnancy. With the rise of such a movement that campaigns against rights recognition in the name of enacting Islamic values, challenges must be multiplied. This is what Rinaldo (2013) portrayed about the way conservative ideas on gender are spread amongst anti-feminist Muslim women, namely by contrasting so-called "Western values" with Islamic teaching. Dealing with this, Moallem (2001) explains that such a way of thinking has led to tension between feminist and anti-feminist supporters, which lays on contradictory gender foundations, discourses, and thoughts.

Likewise, in the case of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill, formerly known as RUU PKS (*Rancangan Undang-undang Perlindungan Kekerasan Seksual*, now known as RUU TPKS—Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Seksual), the existence of this anti-feminist movement is believed to have brought greater challenges for the promotion of social transformation in society. Although the Bill was proposed to protect victims of sexual violence, it turned out to be an object of protest amongst female anti-feminists. Expressions of rejection against the Bill could be seen both in mass protests and in social media campaigns. Amongst the social media accounts that were very active in campaigning against the Bill were @gagalkanrupks, @aliansicerahkannegeri, @tanpajil, and so forth. Those social media accounts actively campaigned for public rejection against the legalization of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill, because it was seen as adopting Western culture and would further incite sexual violence against women and children.

This paper aims to discuss the debates around the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill. Despite its rising phenomenon, there has been little academic discussion on anti-feminist movements in Indonesia. Using the idea of hegemonic patriarchy, this paper tries to explain why some women rejected the Bill that would protect their rights and safety. By doing so, this paper also tries to contribute to the discussion of a stagnant gender equality movement, which can be explained not only from the perspective of patriarchy, but also hegemonic patriarchy;

referring to patriarchy that is supported by its victims, namely women. By focusing on such an anti-feminist movement, which mushroomed following the launch of the Elimination of Sexual Violence Bill, this research is meant to shed light on things rarely elaborated through scholarly works (Ulfah, 2012; Musarrofa, 2015; Wieringa, 2015; Oliviana, 2017; Platt et al., 2018). This research confirms Wieringa's (2015) argument that most of the resistance to gender or feminist movements, such as in the case of rejecting the Elimination of Sexual Violence Bill by women themselves, departs from a misunderstanding about concepts related to gender and feminism.

METHODS

This paper is based on qualitative research using desk reviews and in-depth interviews. Data collection was conducted during the peak of the covid-19 pandemic (January-June 2021); hence interviews were conducted online. The main data of desk reviews included the Bill document, media reports (including mainstream media reports and social media posts), the government's press release (as the National Parliamentary Body's Release), and research reports by non-profit organizations. Eleven key informants were interviewed from both the pro- and anti-Bill groups. The informants were selected based on their public exposure in either rejecting or supporting the Bill through their website and social media releases, as well as through mainstream media. There were 3 key informants from groups that rejected the Bill consisting of Aliansi Cinta Negeri, Aliansi Cinta Keluarga (AILA/Family Love Alliance), namely Evi Risna Yanti, and activists of the PKS party; a party known to be on the frontline for rejecting the Bill, namely Sri Vira Chandra, who was also a PKS candidate from East Jakarta for Jakarta's city council (DPRD) 2019. To deepen the understanding, this research also observed the Instagram profiles of @gagalkanruupks, @aliansicerahkannegeri, and @tanpajil, as well as the social media accounts of Muslimah Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (MHTI) and Alliance to Enlighten the Country (*Aliansi Cerahkan Negeri/ACN*). All of these groups and accounts can be said to be affiliated with conservative Islamic organizations. In order to enrich the data, researchers interviewed 8 informants who supported the Bill including from the Kalyanamitra Foundation, Fahmina Foundation, Indonesian Women's Coalition (KPI), Aisyiah, Yayasan Kesehatan Perempuan (YKP), LBH APIK, and other organizations such as KOMNAS Perempuan and the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, as supporters of the Bill. As supporting

data, this research also analyzed the position of non-profit organizations such as Yayasan Plan International Indonesia and Oxfam in Indonesia through their news reports.

INDONESIAN ANTI-FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN THE POST-REFORMASI ERA

Reformasi in Indonesia has brought promises for social and political transformation through democratization supported by both civil society and the international community. Since *Reformasi*, Indonesia has established crucial progress towards a betterment of life for women. One was through the issuance of Presidential Instruction Letter No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development. The Instruction Letter encourages the mainstreaming of gender in planning produced by governmental ministries and institutions, as well as implementation and evaluation in order to promote equality (Fithriyah 2017).

The second was through the issuance of Law No. 12/2003 on National and Local Representative Bodies and Regional Representative Council Elections (DPR, DPD and DPRD-*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, and Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*). The Law asserts that all political parties proposing candidates for national and local elections need to allocate a quota for women of at least 30 percent. The Law is strengthened by Law No. 22/2007 on Electoral Governance, which asserts a 30 Percent quota for electoral commissions (KPU-*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*).

The third was through the issuance of Law No. 23/2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. Through this law, some breakthroughs on the handling of domestic violence were inserted in order to encourage society to participate more actively in handling the issues. The law also eases the legal processes of violence by asserting the victim as a witness, themselves, who can sue by only showing one piece of evidence.

The last one is related to the Marriage Law, which was changed from Law No. 1/1974 to Law No. 16/2019. The main point of the Law was to change the minimum age for both men and women to get legally married to at least 19 years of age. This is a breakthrough, because previously the Law allowed children to get married, and differentiated between men and women in terms of minimum age for getting married (16 years old for women and 18 years old for men). The change is seen as crucial to promote a fundamental principle of gender equality, considering that women used to be the victims

of forced child marriage. Female activists struggled for the ratification of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill to advocate for women's fundamental rights in gaining protection against sexual violence. This Bill was legally ratified in April of 2022. Without democratization brought by *Reformasi*, mostly all of these missions would not have had the possibility to rise, therefore, *Reformasi* means a lot for gender equality campaigns.

Despite all the progress, in practice, there are obstacles coming from women's groups that reject all forms of promoting women's rights and gender equality. This rejection is even socially organized and institutionalized through political movements. The case of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill shows us very clearly how the contrary movement against the Bill was even being led by female figures. Interestingly, such a rejection has been mushrooming since the post-*Reformasi* era concurrently with Islamization, which tries to mainstream so-called "Islamic values" (anti-Western) in all sides of social and political lives. Referring to Kersten (2016, p. 3), *Reformasi* has reopened room for debate for long conflicting parties amongst Muslim communities on whether to leave or adopt the idea of an Islamic state. This lets us understand that *Reformasi* has not only encouraged the birth of progressive transformation, but also of conservatism.

The manifestation of these debates, in fact, influences other parts of life, such as those related to gender. Lately this has divided women's groups into pro or con in gender equality campaigns. The progressive ones affiliate with women's movements, while the conservative ones join the anti-feminist movement. Referring to Kartika (2019), the rise of identity politics and political Islam since the *Reformasi* era has taken part in shaping the anti-feminist movement, which was stimulated with the case of Ahok in 2017. Indeed, the Ahok case in 2017 was not the single stimulator of the anti-feminist movement strengthening. The movement has roots in the 2014 election, which discredited Jokowi as a presidential election candidate head-to-head with Prabowo, a representative of a Muslim wing, driven by the coalition of Gerindra and PKS in the legislative body and supported by right wing conservative organizations such as FPI (Front Pembela Islam), as well as other Muslim conservative organizations. The framing of Jokowi as communist and anti-Islam attracted the attention of women collected in conservative Muslim organizations and encouraged them to vote against all forms of so-called Western values, including those promoting gender equality.

What happened in the 2014 Presidential Election,

however, was also a long result of Islamism that had been taking a new place since the *Reformasi* era and had occasionally won electoral processes in local regions, including in the City of Pamekasan, Padang, Gorontalo, and Tangerang (Mujahiduddin, 2012). Based on Budiman's records (2008), sharia-by-laws as issued by some district government heads clearly reflect the aspiration to institutionalize Islamic values in Indonesian formal legislation. Institutionalization of Islamic values at the national level can clearly be seen, for instance, in the Anti-Pornography and Porno-action Law that was advocated by conservative organizations in the name of protecting women against exploitation, but female activists often actually saw it as a means to control women's bodies (Yuliarni, 2013). This confirms Rinaldo (2013) who asserts that after the transition to democracy, the face of Indonesian Islam is also directed toward a more conservative position, in addition to the moderate and progressive ones as represented by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Indeed, the Islamization of Indonesian society towards a conservative wing is not a new phenomenon. Long before the era of independence, the introduction of Islam in Sumatra, for instance, enforced the domestication of women and controlling women in the public sphere. The Padri War in West Sumatra in the early 19th century introduced burkas that covered all of a woman's body except her eyes (Hadley, 2008, p. 9).

Referring to Isnaningtyas (2021, h. 52), the rise of the anti-feminist movement amongst women in the current era can be related to the *Hijrah* phenomenon, in which women are encouraged to seek and live a new way of life through "Islam". Using the case of Semarang city, Isnaningtyas explains that the *Hijrah* movement is shaped through Qur'anic study (*pengajian, liqo', kajian* and other forms of studies) which encourages women to adopt an Islamic way of life, including in determining their political stance. Isnaningtyas also identifies agents who are influential in shaping this movement, which include male religious scholars; famous ones, a *hijrah* celebrity, and female religious scholars, too. What happens in Semarang reflects what happens throughout Indonesia, as well, in which *hijrah* and Qur'anic study contribute to the formation of a conservative mindset amongst women to support anti-feminism; more simply, feminism and gender equality are framed to be anti-Islam. In this case, the idea of hegemonic patriarchy explains it well, namely how patriarchy is uncritically perceived by women in the name of obeying religious values and to live the "Godly" life, although it is clear, it discredits them from being equal with men. Indeed, this brought challenges to the

agenda for pro-gender equality campaigns, as they not only need to tackle challenges from the existing male-dominated patriarchy, but also the hegemonized mindset of some women.

ANTI-FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN CURRENT PRACTICES: THE CASE OF CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE SEXUAL VIOLENCE ELIMINATION BILL

Although political Islam promoting textualization and formalization of Islamic values in political systems has been strengthening since the dawn of the *Reformasi* era, the anti-feminist movement was actually not very openly exposed until the launch of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill. Concerns have actually been raised within internal forums, however, as through *liqo* or other religious study forums. Campaigns amongst fellow women to encourage the domestication of women, placing men as the subject of women's obedience, have also been very common to find. However, the frontal framing of the anti-feminism campaigns have just been sharpening since the heated debates about the Bill.

From tracing media reports through a number of social media, as reported by Tempo.co (2019), the anti-feminist movement had just attracted public attention in 2019 when a group of women campaigned publicly for "Indonesia without feminists" with the hashtag #uninstallfeminism. These women not only actively campaigned against the legalization of the Sexual Violence Bill through protests/demonstrations, but also utilized social media to gain widely engaged supporters. An activist of Aliansi Cinta Negeri (ACN) said in an interview:

"...now there are many people who use social media; therefore, we use social media so that our target can be achieved. We know which people are currently controlling social media, and we hope that we will be present on social media so that everything becomes easier (to counter) like that. We observe that the pro-RUU groups are people who control the media, so we also balance them by campaigning through social media, as well. Therefore, we are here through Instagram @gagalkanruupks to provide understanding to the public."

The main questions are, what were the most significant concerns of these women that they refuse to support the Sexual Violence Bill? First of all, we need to

understand the main points of the Bill first, which include the following. By context, the Bill was proposed as a part of the response to rampant sexual violence, including those that involve children as victims. It is noted that there were 259,150 cases in 2016, 348,446 cases in 2017, 406,178 in 2018, and 431,471 cases in 2019. In 2020, due to the pandemic, it was not possible to conduct systematic research, so as the National Commission for Women, we could only collect information on up to 299,911 cases regarding sexual violence. This should not be read as a sign of decrease. This is merely a technical matter from the pandemic that made it impossible to collect data due to limited mobility. As a matter of fact, based on interviews with some female activists in different cities, during the pandemic, cases of sexual violence, especially those involving close family members or friends as perpetrators, rose. An interview with an Aisyiah activist in Bojonegoro (Interview on March 2021) revealed the following:

"Please do not get it wrong. We tend to think that the pandemic means that people are only concerned about health and the economy. In reality, early marriage has risen and violence against women in the domestic sphere has also increased."

Meanwhile, a KPI activist in West Java (Interview on March, 2021) asserted that:

"We are handling the sexual abuse case of a girl who was abused by her step-father. It is quite challenging because family members are not always willing to pursue the case in court. So, we let them understand the risks and to try to consider the girl's future. After a long discussion, the family seemed to decide to bring the case to the police."

In Mary Wollstonecraft's idea (1792), all of what the activists strive for through the Bill, to strengthen the recognition of the rights of women, especially because they are considered inferior, can be related to feminism (2009). The Sexual Violence Elimination Bill, as such, is part of the support for a feminist movement, too.

Considering the rampant cases of sexual violence, activists felt that some important aspects needed to be regulated. This resulted in the formulation of the Bill as follows. First of all, it includes regulations for nine acts considered to be sexual violence. Second, it underlines the recognition of women's rights for protection against sexual violence. Third, it contains rights for victims and their families in relation to cases of sexual violence.

Fourth, it regulates rights for those advocating these cases, so they could gain protection and guarantees against security threats. Fifth, it regulates the sanctions for those committing sexual violence (IDN Times, 2021). Some crucial assertions of the Bill on the rights of the victims, including protection and rehabilitation; the scope of sexual violence that includes educational institutions, government offices, corporations, and so forth; the need for education and capacity building for sexual protection for government apparatus; as well as sanctions for forced marriage, forced sexual relations for married couples, forced prostitution, and forced sexual slavery were deleted from the Bill (as reported by CNN Indonesia, 2021).

With the Bill proposed by female activists to be legalized by the government, there were, however, some other female groups who refused to support it. They even campaigned for the wide rejection of the Bill and accused those who advocated for the Bill as Western ideology supporters. As mentioned previously, these female groups include the Alliance for Family Love (*Aliansi Cinta Keluarga/AILA*), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia's Muslimah (MHTI), Alliance to Enlighten the Country (*Aliansi Cerahkan Negeri/ACN*), Indonesian Family Activists (*Penggiat Keluarga Indonesia/GiGa*), Caring Family Society (*Masyarakat Peduli Keluarga/MPK*), and the Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia / KAMMI*). Referring to Hilipito (2020), the Bill was accused as too feminist—something negatively seen as not matching with Indonesian culture—and not suitable with Pancasila. The Bill was also seen to be liberal and too Westernized.

Based on desk reviews and interviews, the main points of rejection were the following. First of all, the legal foundation of the Bill, which contains the idea of feminist legal theory, is seen as unsuitable with Indonesian culture and the religious values embraced by Indonesian people. From the perspectives of AILA and MPK, feminism causes tension and conflict between men and women and is not a solution for social life. They disagree with the term “sexual control” as it contradicts religious teaching, in which to them, women's sexual desire and aspiration should be controlled by religious regulations. They also see that the Bill is not necessary because the points regulated have been mentioned in the Anti-Domestic Violence Law (Law No. 23/2004) and Criminal Acts Law (Law No. 1/1946).

There is no such thing called “violence” in the Criminal Acts Law, so they deem the Bill not feasible to legalize. The existing Laws only recognize the word

“crime” and not “violence”. Therefore, they do not see that the Bill has a legally relevant root to proceed further. With all these states of beings, it is argued that the Bill would only encourage “sexual orientation deviation”; more exactly pointing out LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) support in pre-marriage sexual relationships—the Bill asserts the point of “as long as done with “concern”—and thus promote uncontrolled sexual freedom, can encourage friction for the existing “harmonious” wife-husband relationships for the term “marital rape”, and lead to further family conflict for criminalizing family members who arrange child marriage. Another argument was that the Bill contained social ambiguity (Muslikhati, 2004; Nawaz, 2019). In simple words, the Bill would bring more dangers and destructions than benefits.

An activist of Aliansi Cinta Negeri asserted:

“If I'm not mistaken during SBY's time, there was a KKG Bill (*RUU Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender*), that was the product they wanted to target. Let alone Islam, the concept was also quite contrary to our social conditions, so it was totally opposed (by us). If we look at it, there are several laws whose spirit is a feminist spirit, for example the PKDRT Law (*UU Perlindungan Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga*), because it states that the victim is a woman, even though the victims are not only women. Then, there are also the Manpower Law and the Election Law that affirmatively stated 30%, which are (the regulatory) products that they are proud of.”

Referring to Tarrow (1994), all the campaigns against the Bill resembled what Tarrow called counter-movements, referring to a response to social change, driven by a conscious, collective, and organized effort to stop the ongoing social change. As noted by Mohgissi (1999), feminists are among the greatest enemies of fundamentalist groups, so much so that whatever is brought by feminists is rejected by fundamentalists. Therefore, it is not a surprise that those women's groups strove to stop the ratification of the Bill, because their conservative ideology is consistent with what we understand as fundamentalism.

As noted by Kania (2020), those groups aspired that if the government were willing to pursue the legislation process of the Bill, they had to change the terms “Sexual violence” to “sexual crime.” They also urged the government to delete some controversial terms such as “marital rape,” as they believe that there is no such thing as rape between two people married to each other

based on so-called Islamic values. They also demanded to reconsider the term “consent”, as there is no term as “consent” in Islam. They believe that there is no bodily autonomy, because autonomy is only owned by Allah. The human body is owned by Allah. They reject sexual relations before marriage, and thus, points on adultery had to be included in the Bill, and the “concern” of having a sexual relationship in married life was too “Western”.

Another activist from Aliansi Cinta Keluarga (AILA) insisted that:

“Human beings will accept any reason that satisfies their mind. So, it’s about how we make women understand in particular, that this ideology (the Pro-Bill) is wrong, that is why we strive to provide the right understanding, which makes sense to the women’s understanding, and in accordance with their reasoning (but based on their religious beliefs).”

Indeed, the argumentation espoused by the anti-Bill groups encouraged rebuttal from those pro-Bill, including those coming from other Muslim organizations. Swara Rahima is an instance of a Muslim women’s organization that rejected the accusation that the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill promoted anti-Islam and pro-Western values. Conversely, in their point of view, the kind of gender equality promoted by the Bill since the very daily scope of gender relations—namely family—contained the strong message of justice brought by Islam. In addition to Swara Rahima, there was the Fahmina Institute, which involved male and female religious scholars as activists that loudly asserted the urgency to legalize the Bill (Fahmina, 2015). In addition to Swara Rahima and Fahmina, there were Fatayat, affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (as reported by nu.or.id, 2019) and Aisyiah, affiliated with Muhammadiyah (as reported by Media Indonesia, 2020) that supported the ratification of the Bill. Swara Rahima, Fahmina, as well as Fatayat and Aisyiah, stood together with the other pro-gender equality organizations such as Kalyanamitra (based on an interview with Rena Herdiyani, Kalyanamitra Foundation in March 2021), KPI (based on an interview with Mike Verawati, Secretary General of Indonesian Women’s Coalition, May 2021), YKP, LBH APIK, Yayasan Plan International Indonesia (2021), Oxfam in Indonesia (2020), Komnas Perempuan (based on an interview with Alimatul Qibtiyah, Commissioner of the National Commission on the Elimination of Violence against Women in March 2021), and others that pushed for the legalization of the Bill to become formal law. The assertion of those women’s groups was strengthened

by Rosidin, the director of the Fahmina Foundation (Interview on May, 2021), who said:

“The legalization of the Bill is an emergency because Indonesian Law has not recognized protection against victims of sexual violence, although we can clearly see that sexual violence is a common case in Indonesia. There is clearly a religious value (Islamic teaching) being advocated through the advocacy of the Bill, namely gender justice.”

Apart from strong rebuttals from other female activists, the struggle to prevent the ratification of the Bill did not stop. When the national parliamentary body at last decided to include the Bill as their initiative (for further ratification processes), rejections remained strong.

The name of the Bill was changed to Criminal Act on Sexual Violence Bill (RUU *Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Seksual*). As a middle way, the Parliament deleted some crucial parts including rights of victims and gender justice at the micro-level, as in the family, in line with the concerns of the anti-feminist groups. Of course, this led to dissatisfaction amongst other female activists, but those anti-feminist groups continued to disagree with the new formulation. In the parliamentary body, the political party that supported the anti-feminist groups, namely PKS (Partai Keadilan Sosial) rejected further legislation processes, unless the points on adultery were included (DPR RI’s press release, 2022).

For them, including points on adultery meant that the Bill would contain religious values, because it would mean the state has to be concerned with the potential or actual sexual relations of all unmarried couples. PKS did not sign the agreement, although all the other political parties were in one voice to pass the Bill onto further legislation processes. With all the surreptitious processes of the Bill to get ratified by the government as a legal product, on the other hand, the campaigns by anti-feminists remained strong. The social media accounts of those supporting anti-feminism remained active and gained active engagement from audiences. They always seemed to look for loopholes to refuse (Carty, 2018).

HEGEMONIC PATRIARCHY AND ANTI-FEMINIST MOVEMENT: CHALLENGES TO GENDER EQUALITY

Based on the discussion above, we can see that challenges for gender equality can come not only from men, who dominate domestic and public spheres, but also from women who perceive male domination as “normal”,

“natural”, or even “necessary” due to cultural or religious beliefs. In the explanations of Ulfah (2012), Yuliarni (2013), Wieringa (2015), Platt, et al. (2018), the perceived subjugated gender ideology relates to a partial understanding of gender relations by the women themselves. As in the case of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill, religious teaching delivered by male and female clerics embracing patriarchal values as agents, played crucial roles in shaping the women’s mindsets (Isnangingtyas, 2021). This transcendental belief was then realized through taking the contrary position towards the movement of gender equality and sometimes even following it up with a real counter-movement, both online and offline. As the teaching underlines women’s obedience as a religious deed, despite the fact that it disrupts their autonomy with themselves and their bodies, such beliefs were taken for granted as a “sacred” religious devotion.

The big question that might arise is why women rejected actions that tried to recognize and promote their rights and equality with men, and even advocated for their protection against sexual violence? From the case of the anti-feminist movement to counter the ratification process of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill, we can learn about hegemonic patriarchy, which indeed poses an equally challenging obstacle for gender equality as male patriarchy. The concept of hegemonic patriarchy is related to a fundamental element in which, “women exist as potential sexual objects for men while men are negated as sexual objects for men (or for women, in reverse) ... Women provide heterosexual men with sexual validation and men compete with each other for this validation”, and “homosexuality [has posed] an important challenge to the traditionally held view (of heterosexuality) (Richardson 1993). Women’s obedience to men, whether it may be husband, father, and/or brother, is a must, as the reverse response is a big sin/not acceptable. Disobedience will label women as “nasty”, “uncontrollable”, or “dishonoring” the family. Therefore, self-tolerance towards objectification in sexual relations is commonly confirmed, starting with forced child marriage—in the name of protecting girls from adultery, forced sexual relations in marriage—in the name of “worship”, and stoning as sanction for adultery. Women perceive all these ideas as norms, and, therefore, it makes it sound hegemonic.

In the context of some women’s rejection of the Bill, religious institutions function as the source of hegemony, as the teaching is uncritically perceived; almost without question. Riyani (2021, p. 217) highlights this clearly, “Muslim women perceive marriage as a

social, cultural, and religious obligation that they need to fulfil. They realize that finding an ideal marriage partner is complicated, with some having the opportunity for a long courtship and others barely knowing their partner prior to marriage. There is a strong tendency, with some exceptions, for women to consider a sexual relationship in marriage as their duty and their husband’s right. Religious and cultural discourses justify and support this view and consider refusal a sin (*dosa*) or taboo (*pamali*). Both discourses emphasize obedience towards husbands in marriage.” This is in line with the findings of Alfirdaus and Rahayu (2022) that identify refusal towards men’s sexual aspiration (in this case, a husband) is only tolerated for reasons considered an emergency such as the wife having just given birth, having her period, the husband having HIV, and/or the husband having an STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease). Reasons such as the wife feeling sick or tired are less confirmed by most women who believe a sexual relationship is their duty. The least confirmed reason of those seeing sexual relations as a form of women’s obedience to men (husband) was when the woman does not agree to have sexual relations only because she is not in a good mood.

This kind of belief poses a strong challenge towards gender equality, as well as a dilemma for female activists. First of all, tackling the issue will need a long time, because it is rooted in structural complexities that relate to access and awareness. In Bacchi’s term (1999), it is called non-awareness of a problem, where gender inequality and control are not perceived as problems and should not be problematized. Therefore, discussions are never welcomed, because it is perceived as an ideology. Secondly, it poses a dilemma because direct confrontation may lead to label female activists as irreligious, coopted by Western ideology, and hegemonized, too. In this state of being, contesting the ideas within policy making, as in the battle for the ratification of the Sexual Violence Elimination Bill, is unavoidable.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that challenges for gender equality not only come from men and the male patriarchy, as usually depicted by most scholars when explaining the stagnancy of women’s movements in the Indonesian context. Women can also contribute obstacles to gender equality promotion and even become frontliners for countering the women’s movement. Intense and strong resistance by conservative Muslim women as represented by organizations affiliated with conservative parties and organizations as mentioned above is a clear

example of how women can hamper efforts to promote the recognition of their rights, equality to men, and protection against sexual violence.

Of course, this is part of the paradox because women refuse to be advocated on the basis of religious and cultural understanding. The values of liberal freedom, which are considered to be contained in the Elimination of Sexual Violence Bill, seem to be the reason why these groups rejected the Bill — in fact, the existence of this Bill is urgently needed to protect victims of sexual violence, especially considering the high number of cases. The accusation of the ideas as Western ideology also blocked them from further discussions to reveal the reasons behind the relevance and urgency of ratifying the Bill. Ideology led to a frontal rejection for dialogue between the two parties in the legislation processes of the Bill.

Hegemonic patriarchy well explains the condition where male domination is perceived as natural, normal, and necessary in the name of religious obedience. Women reject protection due to an assumption that it is a Western ideology. They also did not agree with the idea of women's bodily autonomy, as the body, for them, is perceived to be owned by God and it should be utilized in the way God accepts, as through good deeds in marriage. Therefore, "concern" does not make any sense for them, although it clearly refers to protection against unwanted sexual threats. All of these ways of thinking are signs of hegemony, for the little room for discussion and negotiations, as well as for the perceived understanding that all of these things are transcendental, although they may deal with inequality.

From this study, we can identify one of the roots of the stagnancy of campaigns for gender equality, which ironically comes from women, themselves. Hegemonic patriarchy helps understand why, despite the need for further elaboration in future studies. So far, gender scholars and female activists have focused mainly on male domination in decision making as an explanation for stagnancy in equality advocacy. In fact, however, women with a hegemonized understanding about gender relations, rooted from patriarchal religious teaching, is a significant obstacle for further campaigns. By revealing these obstacles posed by the women, themselves, we can see other rooted problems in gender equality promotion.

This research realizes that the groups against the Bill were not less exposed in public media when compared to groups supporting the Bill. Therefore, as part of the limitations of this study, key informants from these against-groups were fewer than those from the supporting groups. For future study, it is important to trace more deeply into the practical and ideological reasoning of

those who were against the Bill, so further understanding can be identified.

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