

Women leadership and issues of female-headed households in Kedak Village, Kediri Regency

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Abstract

This research discusses women's leadership and the issue of female-headed households in Kedak village, Kediri regency, with the background that 20 percent of heads of households in the village are women and led by a female village head who is also female-headed households. This research aims to analyze the role and impact of Sunarti's leadership on the issues faced by female-headed households in Kedak Village. This research fills the gap in the literature on women's leadership in rural areas and provides information about policies and programs that are responsive to female-headed households. By using a feminist research methodology that practices qualitative methods with data collection techniques such as literature study, document study, and interviews, this research concludes three things: firstly, the socio-political pressure of the community and Sunarti's leadership experience are the main factors in obtaining her position. *Secondly*, women's representation in the Kedak Village government is still less than half of male representation. *Third*, Sunarti's efforts to accommodate the issues of female-headed households are reflected in the economic, health, and political sectors. Although yet to be optimal, Sunarti's leadership shows partiality towards female-headed households.

Keywords: village politics, women's leadership, women village heads, female-headed household issues

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1. Introduction

Women's leadership in public office is a significant achievement because of its perceived positive impact on women's lives. This argument stems

from the belief that compared to men, women can better understand the needs of their group and the wider community. In this regard (Eagly, 2001). They mentioned that women leaders can bring

different perspectives, values, and priorities and tend to promote the welfare of others.

In the context of public office, women leaders are expected to influence the quality of women's representation substantively and symbolically. (Mackay, 2014) Substantively, women's leadership can be linked to how they confront, negotiate, consider, and address issues faced by women under their leadership, whether these issues receive attention or not.

Women's issues span a wide range from health, economic, educational, socio-cultural, and political issues. Among these issues, there is the issue of female-headed households, often referred to as women-headed or woman-maintained households, referring to women who have the role of assuming sole responsibility for supporting their families (ESCWA, 2022).

Based on data from the national socio-economic survey of the Central Statistics Agency in 2020, 11.4 million families were headed by females. In other words, one (one) in four (four) households in Indonesia is headed by a female. (Indra Kertati, 2022). As well 10% or 1 (one) out of 10 (ten) heads of poor households are led by female heads of households, with an estimated population of 1.2-1.5 million (Agussalim et al., 2019).

In general, female-headed households still live below the poverty line with an average education level of not completing primary school and tend to work in the informal sector. Based on existing data, there is a linear relationship between women's poverty and female-headed households (Putri et al., 2019).

In addition to the issue of poverty, female-headed households also face limitations in accessing resources, be it capital resources and education, including limited access to employment opportunities. The existence of social stigma and gender stereotypes often discredit female-headed households in gaining support from the community; therefore, they do not have equal access to employment with men (Subasman et al., 2023). The challenges faced by female-headed house-

holds who are persons with disabilities are even more significant.

The various problems female-headed households face indicate they need to get policy interventions that favor them. Moreover, the number of female-headed households in Indonesia continues to increase by 13%-17% every year (Agussalim et al., 2019).

Normatively, Law Number 16 of 2019, concerning amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974, concerns marriage. Article 31, paragraph (3) explains that the husband is the head of the household while the wife is the homemaker. This article indirectly confirms that the head of the household is exclusively the husband, so when women replace this role, it often does not receive the same attention. In addition, article 34, paragraphs (1) and (2) emphasize that men are obliged to protect their wives, while wives should take care of the household. There is a traditional division of roles in this article, which also emphasizes the status of the head of the household attached to men.

It is important to note that this status can be comprehensive in the context of female heads of household. This status can not only be attached to women who have been married but can also include women who have lost their husbands, single women who provide for themselves or their families, women whom their husbands have abandoned, women whose husbands are chronically ill, married women who are breadwinners, and married women whose husbands migrate and work outside the region (Wijayanti et al., 2016). However, according to village government data, this research limits the status of female heads of households, which refers to women who were once married but are now heads of families due to death or divorce.

In the rural context, which has the lowest government structure, the issue of female-headed households should also be a concern, considering that Village Law No. 6/2014 has given village governments broad authority and several budgets. Based on this authority and budget, the vil-

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lage government must address various issues. For example, attention to women's issues can be reflected in the policy products created by the village government.

In general, the issues faced by rural women are diverse. Rural women need access to adequate health information in the health sector. The high mortality rate of mothers and toddlers in rural areas characterizes this. In the field of education, the level of education of women in the village is also still low; as many as 31.28% of women in rural areas are elementary school graduates, 19.77% do not have a diploma, and 7.35% of women in rural areas experience illiteracy (Linasari, 2023).

Meanwhile, in the economic field, most women in the village live below the poverty line, especially for female-headed households. In addition to cases of domestic violence, the issue of early marriage is also higher and often occurs against women in rural areas (Umasugi, 2019). The above issues will undoubtedly be more severe if experienced by female-headed households if the village government does not kindness them.

Regarding women's leadership in the village, the number of women village heads in Indonesia still needs to be increased. Data from the Village Potential Survey conducted by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2021 shows 76,372 villages in Indonesia. Of the 76,372, 71,432 villages are led by men, and only 4,940 are led by women. If these figures are compared, 93.09% of village/lurah heads in Indonesia are male, and 6.91% are led by female village/lurah heads (BPS Indonesia, 2022).

The discussion about leadership has often referred to masculine male leadership. Fewer women leaders exist because structural and cultural barriers limit women's opportunities. The government's attention to women's leadership is also nonexistent, given that state regulations on women's quotas in strategic positions are rarely found.

The phenomenon of female village heads and female-headed households can be observed

in Kedak Village, Kediri Regency. There are 333 out of 11,678 (equivalent to 20 percent) household heads in Kedak Village who are women. Interestingly, the village head herself is also a female-headed household. Amidst the challenges of the issue of female-headed households, Kedak Village has succeeded in becoming one of the villages in Kediri Regency that has become a pilot for the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village (DRPPA) program by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection since 2021. The unit of analysis in this research is the Kedak village government and the female-headed households represented by SAPA (Friends of Women and Care for Children) volunteers in Kedak Village.

Departing from the previous explanation, female-headed households face quite complex problems in the economy, health, education, politics, and so on. The presence of women leaders who are kind to their needs is significant, considering that women leaders will be more kind to the needs of their groups.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze the impact of female village heads' leadership on the issues faced by female-headed households in Kedak village, Kediri Regency. Whether under her leadership, they can overcome, accommodate, evaluate, and negotiate their problems and determine whether policies are made to accommodate their needs. Given the scarcity of research that discusses women's leadership and the issue of female-headed households simultaneously in a rural context, this is a significant gap that this research will fill. Therefore, this research will analyze the impact of women's political leadership, in this case, Sunarti, on the problems faced by female-headed households in Kedak village, Kediri Regency.

This paper will explain two important aspects, namely the aspect of women's political leadership related to the process of women, in this case, Sunarti, obtaining her position and how the impact of the policies presented, especially on female-headed households. On the other hand, this

paper will also analyze whether or not the Kedak village government as a political institution has been gender equitable under a woman's leadership.

2. Literature Review

Based on the literature review, both domestically and internationally, shows that research on women's leadership focuses on several aspects. First, scientific articles that discuss women's leadership use feminist perspectives as a form of effort to remove leadership discourse from aspects of masculinity or male dominance. This is because leadership is often and spontaneously associated with masculinity, whereas, in essence, anyone can be a leader (MacKay, 2014; Ndlovu et al., 2016; Sinclair, 2014).

Secondly, scientific articles discuss gender-based differences in leadership practices between men and women. As a fundamental element of human social interaction, gender affects leadership involving relational (Joshi & Goehring, 2018; Mohajan, 2022; Radu et al., 2017).

Third, scientific articles discuss the barriers to women's leadership. These barriers are described with the terms glass ceiling and leadership labyrinth. The glass ceiling describes women's invisible and unexpected barriers to higher leadership. The leadership labyrinth explains that women will face barriers at every level, not just when reaching higher levels of leadership

This leadership labyrinth not only has the effect of numerical inequality between men and women but also creates differences in gender-based leadership characteristics (Genovese & Steckenrider, 2013; Goethals & Hoyt, 2017; Samuelson et al., 2019). Ryaan researched the glass ceiling and showed that women, compared to men, tend to be appointed to leadership positions with higher risks than men (Goethals & Hoyt, 2017).

Fourth, several articles discuss how women gain their power, whether through political dynasties, family status, socio-political pressure from

the community, or because of women's power (Genovese & Steckenrider, 2013). Fifth, a group of articles that analyze women's leadership styles. There are at least two distinctive leadership models for women, namely the masculine-feminine leadership style, which emphasizes power, competitiveness, hierarchical authority, assertiveness, and task orientation, and the transformational-transactional leadership style, which emphasizes collaboration, organizational change, values-based motivation, and reciprocal interpersonal transactions (Eagly, 2001; Masa et al., 2019; Wijayanti et al., 2016).

Several studies have also examined that ethics of care is one of the aspects that influence women's leadership. This theory emphasizes that women in their leadership tend to care more about the needs of others. Ethics of care focuses on several points, namely the importance of relationships between individuals, trust, responsiveness to the needs of others, equality, freedom, sympathetic response, and care that encourages social ties and cooperation. Ethics of care is a distinctive form of women's morality in relationships and an essential aspect in facilitating the success of women's leadership (Okano, 2016; Adhariani et al., 2017; Jakimow et al., 2019; Pradhani, 2019).

Research (Eagly & Carli, 2003) shows that women's leadership must align with the ethics of care. Women tend to pay attention, fulfill the needs of others, and support social values that prosper. In policy-making, women are more representative of the interests of families, women, ethnicities, and other minority groups. In addition to ethics of care, the feminist institutionalism approach is also used as an analytical knife to see how women's leadership can provide gender-equitable political institutions. Feminist institutionalism is a new approach in the study of political institutions that explores how political institutions can create equitable conditions based on gender norms in policies and actions. This approach also examines how power distribution within institutions can facilitate changes in gender inequality (Bogaards, 2022; Clavero & Galligan, 2020).

This approach seeks to include women as critical actors in the political process by recognizing that women often experience discrimination and low levels of representation. It directly impacts policies, legislation, laws, and quotas and provides deep insight into the gender underpinnings of political institutions. Under women's leadership, efforts to achieve gender-equitable institutions become critical (Childs, 2023).

Furthermore, concerning female-headed households, most research examines the disadvantage and vulnerability of female-headed households in society. This is reflected in the challenges and obstacles they face. These challenges are diverse, one of which is the aspect of norms in society. This aspect of norms in society creates role conflicts for women heads of households (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2020). In society, the two-parent family structure is considered the most ideal, so when a woman heads the household, it is regarded as a deviation and can be stigmatized (Saad et al., 2022). This role is also contrary to social mores derived from the patriarchal system.

In addition, several research studies have examined the fact that female-headed households face economic barriers in the form of poverty. This is because women heads of households play conflicting roles and require them to work in marginal, part-time, informal, and low-income jobs (Husna & Haryanti, 2021; Saad et al., 2022). Other studies show that women face less favorable opportunities than men to diversify their livelihoods (Fuller & Lain, 2020).

In addition, other studies also discuss that the problems of poor social and economic status, then poverty, and multiple responsibilities result in many female heads of households accepting high-risk behavior and low quality of life (Mohajan, 2022; Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2020). Meanwhile, research conducted by (Veisani. Y & Sayehmiri, 2015) Shows that households headed by women have poor health and quality of life. Low literacy rates and chronic diseases characterize this.

Based on the results of the literature search above, there is a research gap that will be filled

by this paper where no previous research has been found that discusses the role of women's leadership and the issue of female-headed households simultaneously in the rural context. No research has been found that discusses these two issues together in the frame of institutional feminist analysis to see the extent to which the village government has been gender equitable.

3. Research Methods

Methodologically, this study is organized within the framework of feminist research methodology that practices qualitative methods. Feminist research aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experiences. A feminist research perspective is necessary for qualitative approaches to enrich the social science research areas. Charles & Kerr (Mohajan, 2022) explains that feminist research methodology is concerned with how or whether knowledge is created with women's social reality dominated by men. Therefore, feminist methodology aims to produce knowledge through ethical and political perspectives focusing on criticizing and overcoming gender-blind scientific approaches.

The author uses primary and secondary data sources in this research. Primary data sources refer to the knowledge or information provided by the informants during the interview process. In addition, primary data sources include documents obtained directly from the Kedak Village government, such as the Village Head Decree, Village Development Index (IDM), Village Budget (APBD), and Social Assistance Documents. Meanwhile, secondary data refers to previous studies that support this research.

In the process of collecting data, this research uses data collection techniques such as literature study, document study, and interviews (Agus Sholahuddin, 2021). For the literature study, literature was searched for both domestically and internationally online. Online literature was collected using two main keywords: women's leadership and the issue of female-headed households.

For in-depth interviews, informants were selected using a purposive sampling method under research considerations. Interviews were used to probe and discover informants' views on the research issues being studied. The informants for this research included the Kedak Village Head, the Kedak Village Secretary, Kedak Village women leaders, and the Kedak Village Consultative Body (BPD).

This research used Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis technique for data analysis. With four components of analysis including the process of data collection, data reduction to focus the research on the main thing to be studied, presenting data, and finally, drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2014).

4. Results and Discussion

Referring to Genovese & Steckenrider, there are three aspects of analysis: first, how women rise to power; second, the leadership style they apply; and third, the policy consequences resulting from their leadership (Genovese & Steckenrider, 2013). *This study will analyze women's political leadership, from the first aspect, how women rise to power, to the third aspect, the policy consequences of their leadership, mainly concerning female heads of households.*

Rise to power of Kedak Village head

Women's leadership in Kedak Village has been integral in the long term. Its history is reflected in the periodic leadership of female village heads from 1999 to the present. Over the past 25 years, Kedak Village has been led by two fe-

male village heads, Sunarti and Sukarti. Sunarti became the first female village head from 1999 to 2013, followed by Sukarti from 2013 to 2019 and 2019 to 2027; Sunarti won the defeat of Sukarti's defense and led again for the third time since 1999.

Sunarti participated in three village head election processes with different opponents throughout her journey. In the 1999 election, Sunarti competed with her opponent, Amir Syarifudin, with 1,984 votes, where Sunarti received 1156 votes, while Amir Syarifudin received 812 votes. In this election, Sunarti was 344 votes ahead of her opponent. For the 2007 village head election, Sunarti competed against Imam Surur with 2,292 votes, where Sunarti received 1483 votes and Imam Surur 797 votes. Sunarti was 686 votes ahead of her opponent. For the 2019 village head election, Sunarti competed against Sukarti with a total of 2,640 votes, whereas Sunarti obtained 1,453 votes and Sukarti had 1,167 votes. Sunarti won by 286 votes. Based on the voting data above, Sunarti seemed to have tighter competition when facing female opponents than men.

Genovese and Stecken Rider explain that the background that encourages women to run for political contestation is diverse. These factors include socio-political upheavals that force women to become leaders, inheritance of power from the family, family status, and women's political leadership experience. In the context of women's leadership in Kedak Village, Sunarti's election as a female village head was driven by two main factors, namely socio-political upheavals in the community and her political leadership experience.

Table 1. Sunarti's vote acquisition data in the Kedak village head elections

Year	Total Votes	Sunarti	Other	Votes Invalid
1999	1.984	1.156	812 (Amir Sayrifudin)	16
2007	2.292	1.483	797 (Imam Surur)	12
2019	2.640	1.453	1.167 (Sukarti)	20

Source: Processed by researchers, 2024

The socio-political upheaval in Kedak Village was marked by the community's insistence that Sunarti run for village head at the relatively young age of 27. This pressure arose because of Kedak Village's backwardness, especially in government administration and village infrastructure. Sunarti's success in leading the youth organization in 1987 was one of the reasons why the community supported her candidacy.

In the political agenda, the community expected Sunarti to bring change and open opportunities for women to occupy leadership positions at the village level. Before her leadership, a male village head always led Kedak Village, and all village officials were male. In addition to the socio-political pressure from the community, Sunarti's election as a female village head for three periods cannot be separated from her political leadership experience during her tenure as village head.

Sunarti's advancement to become the first female village head faced considerable obstacles. These obstacles can be described with the terms 'leadership labyrinth' and 'glass ceiling' to explain the complexity of visible and invisible challenges. The influence of religion and culture is one form of leadership labyrinth that Sunarti faced in her candidacy. Religiously and culturally, Kedak Village is predominantly Muslim, and many government officials at the village and sub-regency levels are religious leaders. Culturally, in Kedak Village, women were not allowed to run for leadership, which was reflected in the dominance of men in the village government at that time.

In addition to religious and cultural barriers, Sunarti's political opponent in 1999 was a man, which became an obstacle in itself, considering the significant dominance of male leadership at that time. Therefore, Sunarti's candidacy symbolized the struggle against male domination and the status quo in Kedak Village. Sunarti only felt these obstacles at the beginning of her candidacy. During her tenure, the people of Kedak Village could accept a woman's leadership. Female leadership in Kedak village has continued since 1999 until now.

Policy consequence for female-headed households

Women's political leadership can then be analyzed from their present policies and how they impact women's groups (Luthfi & Naufal, 2023). According to Genovese & Steckenrider, this impact includes how women leaders increase women's representation in government and promote issues related to women, children, and families, especially in this case, the issue of female-headed households. These issues can be promoted in economics, health, and politics. In addition to using Genovese & Stecken Rider's views, this can also be analyzed using an institutional feminist approach to see whether the Kedak village government as a political institution has been gender equitable or not.

Women's representation in government is one aspect of analyzing women's political leadership and the extent to which the institution has been gender equitable. This can be seen from the proportion of women's representation in the village government, be it in the village apparatus, Village Consultative Body (BPD), Village Community Empowerment Agency (LPMD), and Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) (Dwinugraha, 2019) Under Sunarti's current leadership, there are 12 village government officials and four women, with positions including village head, head of hamlet II, head of service section, and treasurer. Meanwhile, the BPD has nine members, three of whom are women. Three are women in the LPMD. Three are women in the BUMDes, and three are in positions such as chairperson, treasurer, and supervisory chairperson.

Table 2. Women's representation in Kedak Village government

Position	Women	Men
Village Apparatus	4	8
BPD	3	6
LPMD	3	3
BUMDes	3	3
Total	13	20

Based on the data above, each village institution already has women's representation, although the number is below the representation of men. Regarding institutional feminist theory, the women's quota in the village government is sufficiently gender-equitable with women's representation in each village institution. However, the number still needs to be equal to that of men. Therefore, it can also be concluded that increasing women's representation in village government is still quite tricky, even under women's political leadership. The absence of regulations in Law No. 6/2016 that specifically regulate the number of women's representation in the village government is one of the significant obstacles for women.

Apart from the representation of women in the government, Sunarti's leadership can also be analyzed from her efforts to promote women's issues, especially female-headed households, and how the village government, as a political institution, produces policies that benefit them. The women-heads of households referred to in this article are women who are recorded in the village government and become heads of families due to death or divorce.

In Kedak Village alone, in 2024, there were 1,678 household heads, with around 20 percent, or 333, of them women. Compared to 2023, the number of female-headed households in Kedak Village increased from 315 to 333 families, primarily due to cases of death or divorce. The role of women leaders is vital in supporting and empowering female-headed households, considering that their numbers will continue to grow yearly.

More specifically, discussing women household heads, one of the major issues women household heads face in Kedak Village is economic problems in the form of poverty. In Kedak Village alone, 937 families are living below the poverty line, and women head the majority of these families. Poverty is difficult to escape from women's heads of households. There is even a view that the poorest segments of society in the third world live in households headed by women.

This is not without reason, considering that the majority of women who are heads of house-

holds work in the informal sector with marginal, part-time, and minimum-wage jobs (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2020). Also, the majority of them do not complete primary education and experience significant levels of illiteracy.

When looking at the situation of women who are heads of households in Kedak Village, it can be seen that most of them work in the informal sector, such as farm workers, cigarette factory workers, and domestic helpers, with low wage levels. These low wages mean that many of them have to rely on government assistance. As for education, most female household heads in Kedak Village are only primary school graduates. Most of them became female heads of households due to divorce and old age, which made them no longer considered productive workers. This is also reflected in the findings of collaborative research between research institutes SMERU and PEKKA in 17 provinces in Indonesia, which revealed that most of the women who became household heads were over 45 years old (Kurniati et al., 2022)

Sunarti and the Kedak village government's efforts to accommodate the issues of female-headed households can be seen in the economic sector through the provision of social assistance policies and women's empowerment activities, in the health sector through the formation of the SAPA (Friends of Women and Care for Children) volunteer unit, and in the political field through village regulations that favor female-headed households.

Based on the social assistance procurement policy and the data tracking results of social assistance recipients in Kedak Village, 399 families receive social assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs. When looking at the number of low-income families in Kedak Village, 937 live below the poverty line, meaning that only 35% of low-income families are recipients of social assistance. If we look deeper, the female heads of households receiving social assistance are less than 53 families.

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Table 3. Female-headed households receiving social assistance

Type of social assistance	Name & Age
Health Insurance Contribution Assistance (PBI-JK)	Dimiyati (41), Dimiyati (55), Heni Widayah (33), Ika Cahya (37), Jamirah (69), Kasih (64), Lamini (84), Lasminah (54), Miarsih (51), Mila Diyana Inayah (26), Musipah (62), Nuryati (60), Partini (77), Rubingah (55), Rukimah (65), Rusini (61), Sari (49), Sawitri (46), Sinah (55), Siti Sholihah (61), Sukinah (64), Sumirah (60), Supinah (78), Surani (46), Suryani (47), Titik (56), Titik Andriani (34), Tumiran (44), Warni (58), Yahya (55), Zeni Farida (43)
Cash Social Assistance (BST)	Jamirah (69), Marsiyah (69), Musipah (62), Nuryati (60), Siti Romlah (69), Sumini (61), Sunarsih (56)
Family Hope Program (PKH)	Dimiyati (55), Girah (67), Jamirah (69), Kalimah (50), Kalimah (74), Karmi (68), Kasih (40), Lasmiati (47), Miarsih (51), Mila Diyana Inayah (26), Minah (50), Nur Janah (33), Nyarah (61), Sari (49), Siti Romlah (69), Siti Sholihah (61), Sukinah (74), Sunarsih (56), Tari (56), Umayah (47), Wartini (70), Winarti (49)
Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT)	Kalimah (50), Kalimah (74), Karmi (68), Kasih (40), Lasmiati (47), Minah (50), Nur Janah (33), Nuryati (60), Nyarah (61), Rukimah (65), Rusini (61), Siti Fatimah (70), Siti Romlah (69), Sukinah (74), Sumini (61), Sumirah (60), Tumi (64), Umayah (47), Wakinem (62), Wartini (70), Winarti (49)
Direct Cash Assistance for Fuel (BLT-BBM)	Girah (67), Kalimah (50), Kalimah (74), Karmi (68), Kasih (40), Marsiyah (69), Minah (50), Nur Janah (33), Nyarah (61), Rukimah (65), Rusini (61), Siti Fatimah (70), Siti Romlah (69), Sukinah (74), Sumini (61), Sunarsih (56), Umayah (47), Wakinem (62), Wartini (70), Winarti (49)

Based on the data above, it can be analyzed that there are five types of social assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs that are received mainly by female heads of households, including Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), Family Hope program (PKH), Health Insurance Contribution Assistance Program (PBI-JK), Direct Cash Assistance for Fuel Oil (BLT-BBM), and Cash Social Assistance (BST). Based on this data, most female-headed households receive more than one type of social assistance. Meanwhile, for female-headed households that received one kind of assistance, PBI-JK was the dominant type of assistance received. Furthermore, the average female-headed household receiving social assistance is over 45 years old when viewed in terms of age.

The small number of female heads of households who are beneficiaries of social assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs is a significant concern for the Kedak Village government. In addition to the five types of help from the Ministry of Social Affairs above, it should also be noted that the village government also participates in assisting people experiencing poverty through the Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLTDD) program. This is regulated in the Regulation of

the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration Number 13 of 2023. There are five criteria for beneficiary families of the BLTDD program, and one of them is a vulnerable group, namely low-income families headed by women. Therefore, every woman who is the head of a household and lives in poverty should be eligible for this assistance (Kumparan, 2024).

In determining BLTD recipients, the village government has the role and authority to determine who is eligible to become a beneficiary by following the established criteria and collecting data transparently and fairly. PKH/BPNT beneficiaries/pre-employment card holders cannot receive this assistance. In the process of collecting data on social assistance recipients, village volunteers must ensure that poor and vulnerable families, such as female-headed households, older people, and people with disabilities, are prioritized and must not be overlooked.

The BLTDD is set at three hundred thousand monthly rupiahs per family for 12 months. In Kedak Village, the government has allocated Rp 97,200,000 (ninety-seven million two hundred

thousand rupiahs) for BLTDD funds. This translates to at least 27 beneficiaries, with a primary focus on people with mental health disorders (ODGJ) and vulnerable women. Although the specific number of poor female heads of households receiving this assistance is not mentioned, they should be entitled to it based on the criteria.

Meanwhile, in terms of women’s empowerment activities, the Kedak Village government has been implementing economic improvement programs to achieve women’s entrepreneurship since 2022. One of them is the Rosela Group. The Rosella Group is a financial empowerment program for women by producing food and drinks from rosella flowers. However, this activity lasted only a short time because women in Kedak Village experienced obstacles in marketing the products they created.

In addition to the Rosela Group, the Kedak Village government also organizes ongoing hydroponic plant training activities. These activities are held in each hamlet, and the Kedak Village community will sell or consume the hydroponic plant production. This year, the village government is focusing on two women’s economic empowerment activities, namely batik training and catfish farming, under the DRPPA programs.

Apart from the aspects of social assistance provision and economic empowerment, the partiality of the female village head can also be seen from the budget allocation given to accommodate the needs of the female head of the household. Regarding the use of village funds based on Parmenides PDTT No. 5 of 2015, the utilization of village funds is divided into two essential parts: development and empowerment.

The allocation of funds for development is related to fulfilling basic needs, infrastructure facilities, local economic potential, natural resources, and a sustainable environment. Meanwhile, the empowerment aspect relates to improving the quality of the village planning process, BUMDES or other community business groups, increasing the capacity of community groups, promoting health and clean and healthy living movements, managing village forests and

community forests, and increasing the capacity of community empowerment cadres (Putra et al., 2023).

Based on the Kedak Village APB data, it appears that the largest Kedak Village budget is focused on the administration of village governance, which consumes 36% of the total budget, then in the field of implementing village development, 43%, the field of community development 21%, the field of community empowerment 5%, and the field of emergency and urgent village disaster management 5%.



Figure 1. Kedak Village revenue and expenditure budget for 2024
Source: Kedak Village government, 2024.

From the 5% or Rp 104,200,000 of funds in the field of emergency and urgent village disaster management, Rp 97,200,000 or 93% was used for priority programs, namely economic recov-

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ery in the form of BLTDD to support the acceleration of economic elimination with the main focus of targets being ODGJ and vulnerable women's groups. In the community empowerment sector, the village government used 79% or Rp 82,685,000 of the budget of Rp 104,736,500 for food security programs. Meanwhile, Kedak Village has budgeted Rp 125,000,000 for women's empowerment from the community development fund 2024. Concerning social assistance in 2024, the social agency budgeted Rp 399,000,000 in social assistance for the people of Kedak Village. Regarding budget allocation, the Kedak Village government has paid attention to vulnerable women's groups, especially female-headed households.

Apart from the economic aspect, the Kedak Village head's partiality towards women household heads can also be seen in the health sector. In dealing with these health problems, the Kedak Village government, through the DRPPA programs, presents a volunteer unit SAPA (Friends of Women and Care for Children) to strive for the protection and empowerment of women and children in Kedak Village. SAPA has three divisions: the children and youth division, the women's division, and the vulnerable groups division.

SAPA does not only address health issues but more broadly includes empowering women, providing domestic violence complaint services, providing pre-marital education for couples who want to get married, preventing early marriage, seeking no violence against children and women, no children dropping out of school, and so on. In Kedak Village itself, SAPA has been active since 2021 and strives to protect and empower women and children.

In the health sector, the leadership achievements of the Kedak village head, together with the assistance of SAPA volunteers, have brought some significant changes. In 2023, for example, seen from the maternal and infant mortality rate has decreased by more than 10% from the previous year, and for aspects of nutrition and under-five mortality also reduced by more than 10%,

with the number of toddlers who died less than 1%. This success can also be seen in the decrease in the prevalence of stunting in Kedak village, from 24 stunted children to 17 children. In addition, the absence of early marriage cases is one of the significant achievements of the Kedak village head under his leadership.

Meanwhile, the partiality of the Kedak Village government towards female heads of households can also be seen from the political aspect through the existence of village regulations that kindness them. One village regulation, Kedak Village Regulation Number 4 of 2022, concerns Gender Responsive Women-Friendly Village. This village regulation further responds to the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village (DRPPA) program by the Ministry of Women and Child Protection (KemenPPA).

Concerning this program, there are ten success indicators, and one of them is related to the percentage of women entrepreneurs in the village, especially female heads of households, disaster survivors, and survivors of violence (Dewi, 2021). This regulation further encourages the Kedak Village government to present women's economic empowerment programs in which female heads of households also participate.

Under the feminist institutionalism approach, the Kedak village government has created gender-equitable institutions, marked by the representation of women in every village government institution and responsive and gender-equitable policies in the economic, health, and political fields.

5. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Sunarti's leadership has relatively given partiality to female-headed households. This is indicated by the policies presented in the economic, socio-political, and health sectors that try to reduce the problems faced by female-headed households. In addition to looking at the role and impact of Sunarti's leadership on female-headed households, Sunarti's political leadership

is also analyzed from the background of the process of achieving her position as the first female village head in Kedak village and how her efforts to break down women's representation in the village government become an essential aspect. This then also affects whether the Kedak village government as a political institution under the

leadership of a woman has been gender equitable or not. The broad scope of who is referred to as a female-headed household is a breakthrough for future research, considering that this research limits the study only to women who are recorded in the Kedak village government data as heads of households due to death and living divorce.

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