

STRATEGIES AND POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR ENHANCING WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION IN WEST SUMATRA: A GENDER MAINSTREAMING PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the issue of low representation of women in the legislative bodies of West Sumatra, which poses significant challenges to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality). The aim of this research is to explore the representation of women in legislative institutions as part of efforts to promote gender equality, with a focus on the strategies and policy directions implemented by the West Sumatra Provincial Government. This academic paper employs a qualitative descriptive approach, drawing on literature studies from relevant articles, books, and scholarly journals. The findings from the literature review indicate that the representation of women in the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) at the district and city level in West Sumatra remains limited, with Bukittinggi is the only city that achieves the 30% threshold for female representation. In contrast, three other districts—Mentawai Islands, Padang Pariaman, and South Solok—do not have any female legislative members. Several challenges contribute to this issue, including a patriarchal political culture, limited financial resources, and gender stereotypes within Minangkabau culture. In response, the government has adopted strategies such as gender mainstreaming, affirmative action, political party communication, and collaboration with women's organisations, to challenge societal stereotypes and enhance the representation of women in legislative bodies. The findings suggest that, although these measures have prompted gradual improvements, sustained progress towards gender equality will depend on strengthening the enforcement of laws, expanding financial support mechanisms, and fostering deep cultural changes to enhance the influence of women in the legislative arena.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is a global framework that aims in achieving a balance between economic growth, social justice, and environmental preservation. In modern context, global issues such as poverty, social inequality, and climate change require a comprehensive and integrated approach. This framework has been established through various international conferences, with a significant milestone occurred in 2015 when 193 member states of the United Nations (UN) agreed upon the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs encompass 17 goals with 169 targets set for the period of 2015-2030, to attain sustainable development.

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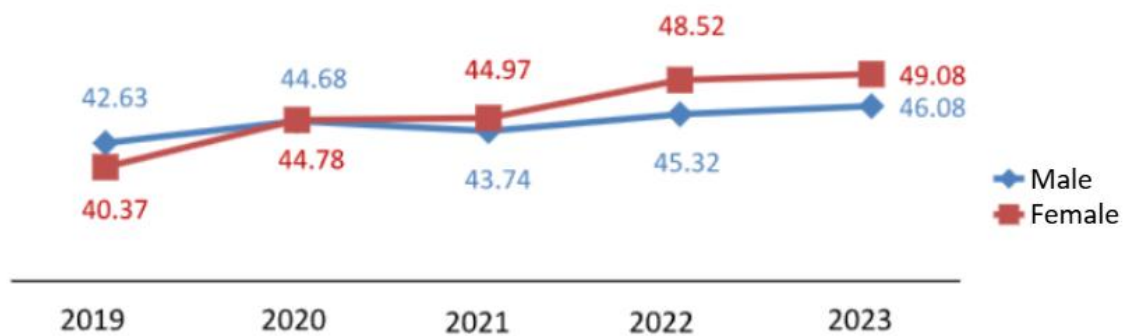
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One of the primary challenges in achieving sustainable development is in the gender equality aspect. Achieving gender equality is crucial for creating an inclusive and just society. The aspect of gender equality is enshrined in the 17 main goals of the SDGs, specifically in the 5th goal that aims to achieve gender equality and to empower women. Sustainable development under Goal 5 seeks to enhance women's empowerment by developing their potential through the elimination of various forms of discrimination and violence, including sexual violence, domestic violence, and child marriage. Women's empowerment provides opportunities for women to express themselves freely and secure their sexual and reproductive health rights. Furthermore, it can ensure women's access to productive resources and their right to participate equally in economic, political, and social aspects, as well as their right to participate in the public sector decision-making. This gender gap not only limits women's opportunities to develop and fully contribute to all aspects of life, but also constrains the economic and social potential of a nation.

Specifically, women's involvement in politics is a crucial element in achieving sustainable development. Women possess significant potential to contribute to various aspects of life, including political decision-making that can have far-reaching impacts on society. When women engage in politics, they bring perspectives that differ from men. Women are often prioritising social justice, family welfare, and the basic rights of communities. In this context, the role of women becomes vital, as their contributions can enrich the democratic process, improve public policies, and create an inclusive environment.

The process of gender mainstreaming in West Sumatra is more complex due to the Minangkabau community's adherence to a matrilineal socio-cultural system. There are strategies implemented by the West Sumatra government to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. First, optimising the management of gender and child data systems for planning, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation. The second strategy involves enhancing gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment across various areas of development. Thirdly, focus on improving the protection of women's rights. These align with the vision of the Governor and Deputy Governor of West Sumatra, which is "Making a civilised, superior, and sustainable West Sumatra a reality" through the implementation of the second mission in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPKMD) of West Sumatra for 2021-2026. It aims to improve the system of community life based on the philosophy of "Adaik Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah." Nevertheless, the implementation of gender mainstreaming in West Sumatra still faces several challenges, including societal perceptions that remain constrained in traditional gender stereotypes.

Figure 1
Percentage of Male and Female Legislative Members 2019-2023



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of West Sumatra Province. (2024). Gender Inequality Index (GII) of West Sumatra Province 2023. <https://sumbar.bps.go.id>

Figure 1 illustrates that the representation of women in legislative bodies in West Sumatra has experienced a significant increase. However, despite these various positive advancements, the challenges faced by women in attaining leadership positions within the legislature persist. Even when women secure legislative seats, they are often hindered from occupying strategic roles. Consequently, further measures are necessary to ensure that women are not only represented in numbers but also given equal opportunities to access central roles in policy-making process. Moreover, the enhancement of women's participation in politics must be accompanied by an increase in political capacity. Without adequate capacity, women may struggle to compete with entrenched male dominance within the political structure.

In the legislative level, although there have been some advancements, the number of women holding significant positions remains far from proportional that of men. Limited women's representation in politics undoubtedly have a substantial impact on the processes of development and policy-making. Without sufficient women's representation in political decision-making, the policies formulated often fail to encompass the needs and aspirations of all segments of society. For instance, issues concerning the welfare of women and children, such as equal access to education, reproductive health rights, and protection from violence, may not receive adequate attention without women's voices in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, despite these considerable challenges, it is crucial to recognise that women's representation in politics benefits not only women themselves but also society as a whole. Sustainable development, grounded in equality and welfare, can only be achieved with equitable representation of women and men in all aspects of life, including political decision-making. Therefore, efforts are required to promote greater representation of women in

politics, particularly within legislative bodies, through education, leadership training, and inclusive policy changes.

Most previous studies have focused on analysing cultural factors or evaluating gender mainstreaming programmes in isolation. Research that combines the mapping of specific barriers in West Sumatra with an analysis of the effectiveness of local government strategies, as well as referencing inter-actor cooperation practices, remains limited. The purpose of this academic work is to fill this gap by examining the strategies and policy directions of the West Sumatra provincial government aimed at promoting women's representation in legislative bodies to achieve gender equality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender, as a social concept, delineates the roles and behaviours of men and women shaped by cultural, religious, and governmental factors. These gender differences are often perceived as immutable biological traits, whereas they are, in fact, the product of enduring social constructions ([Karwati, 2021](#)). The concept of gender is associated with social sex, which distinguishes between males and females not on the basis of biological differences, but rather on the basis of socio-cultural relationships influenced by broader societal structures ([Winarti et al., 2023](#)). Gender equality is a concept that posits that both men and women should have the freedom to enhance and develop their personal abilities and make choices without being constrained by stereotypes, prejudices, and rigid gender roles ([Dilova et al., 2022](#)). Gender equality can be defined as a condition in which men and women have equal opportunities to obtain human rights and participate in various activities such as politics, law, economics, socio-culture, education, and national security. Participation, according to HAR Tilaar, manifests the desire to advance democratic principles through decentralisation ([Mikasih et al., 2024](#)). Therefore, it is imperative to ensure women's participation in all fields as a means of upholding their rights.

To address these disparities, gender mainstreaming must be implemented as a strategic approach to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into policies, programmes, and actions across various aspects of development. Gender mainstreaming is an effort to increase the number of women in specific sectors. This approach aims to create structural and systemic changes that enable the achievement and development of gender equality. In the context of development, gender mainstreaming plays a crucial role in societal life as it often confronts issues related to gender influenced by existing gender inequalities in society, which can lead to discriminatory actions against one party. The implementation of gender mainstreaming in Indonesia is necessary as it can affect various aspects, such as education, economy, and politics.

The Presidential Instruction (Inpres) Number 9 of 2000 concerning Gender Mainstreaming in National Development reflects the Indonesian government's commitment to achieving gender equality and justice. This instruction affirms the government's commitment to minimizing discrimination in all aspects of national life. Consequently, it can support efforts to dismantle systems that are inconsistent with gender equality. The government's endeavour to integrate gender mainstreaming into national development is a significant step, as it demonstrates an awareness that gender equality is not solely a women's issue but a component of social justice that must be upheld by all elements of society. Gender mainstreaming is not merely a policy applicable to women and men, but a strategy to ensure that both have equal access to life opportunities, including employment, education, political participation, and decision-making. This creates opportunities for women to play a more active role in various fields that have previously been dominated by men, such as politics, economics, and the public sector.

The application of gender mainstreaming is crucial, as it can strengthen social inclusion. Social inclusion refers to a condition in which all individuals are free from discrimination based on background, gender, or social status, and have equal access to the fulfilment of rights and resources within society. Social inclusion within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertains not only to economic aspects or involvement in the labour market, but also encompasses participation in political decision-making, access to social services, and the fulfilment of basic rights that should be available to every citizen. In gender mainstreaming, efforts to create genuine social inclusion mean ensuring that women, children, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups have equal access to various aspects of life, from education and health to participation in the political process. The importance of gender mainstreaming in fostering social inclusion is also linked to efforts to reduce social inequalities that have long hindered overall societal progress. When women are granted equal access to education, employment, and political participation, they can make significant contributions to social and economic development.

The application of the concepts of social inclusion and gender mainstreaming encounters unique dynamics in the context of Minangkabau society in West Sumatra. The Minangkabau community follows a matrilineal kinship system (descent based on the maternal line), which differs significantly from regions that adhere to a patrilineal system. The status of women in a matrilineal society (maternal descent) is distinct, with notable differences in social and economic structures. In Minangkabau social culture, women are predominantly positioned within the domestic sphere, and their dignity is often measured by their role as objects. This is reflected in the Minangkabau proverb that describes Minangkabau women as *Limpapeh Rumah Gadang* (The Central Pillar of the Big House) symbolising the greatness of wives' role and highlighting the importance of mothers in family

life. However, despite women holding certain rights in customary matters, they continue to face challenges in accessing education, healthcare, and representation in public decision-making. This is exacerbated by the erosion of culture due to globalisation and the demands for sustainable living.

In the context of the Minangkabau community, the prevailing matrilineal system emphasises women's roles within the family, seemingly allowing them greater involvement in various aspects of life. However, in the political sphere, Minangkabau women encounter a dual reality. On one hand, the matrilineal system positions women as guardians of ancestral heritage. On the other hand, prevailing societal norms strongly favour male leadership in politics and governance. This phenomenon illustrates the gap between the recognition of women's power within the traditional social structure and the limitations they face within formal political structures. In many cases, Minangkabau women with the capacity and potential to actively engage in politics are often hindered by social perceptions that confine women's roles to the domestic sphere. Social norms that prioritise male leadership in politics complicate women's ability to gain full support from family and society in their political ambitions. Families, which should ideally provide complete support, tend to uphold traditional norms that prefer women to remain within the domestic realm and avoid political involvement.

This phenomenon aligns with research conducted by [Soraya Oktarina \(2018\)](#), which indicates that several challenges persist for women in West Sumatra striving to become part of the legislature. These challenges include economic constraints and difficulties in persuading female voters to support female candidates. These issues are exacerbated by prevailing assumptions that question the value of women's participation in politics. Additionally, obstacles impeding women's representation in the legislature include a lack of organisational experience and the need for permission from family members. In a society that upholds traditional values, women often must seek approval from husbands or other family members to engage in politics. Women's reliance on family for permission to participate in political activities reflects an imbalance in decision-making at the domestic level, which impacts their involvement in the public sphere. Many women face constraints in their political participation due to prioritising domestic roles and family responsibilities, particularly those with children requiring full attention. Often, women involved in politics are those who no longer have childcare responsibilities. Social stigma associated to women with excessive public engagement is also viewed unfavourably by society. It leads to perceptions that they violate Minangkabau social norms expecting women to fulfil primary roles within the home. This social stigma becomes a barrier for women in Minangkabau to engage in the political arena ([Deviani & Subono, 2022](#)). Nonetheless, women's roles in politics are crucial to ensure that policies are sensitive to women's needs ([Chandra and Arizal, 2022](#)).

This illustrates the commitment to gender mainstreaming within the political sphere. In accordance with Law Number 2 of 2008 regarding Political Parties, which regulates the requirements for the establishment of political parties, Article 2 states: "The formation and establishment of Political Parties as referred to in paragraph (1) must include 30% (thirty percent) representation of women." The institutional framework within political parties can be referred to as affirmative action, an obligation for political parties to include at least 30% representation of women in the formation and management at the central level. Through this policy, the government seeks to enhance women's public participation, particularly in politics. Research conducted by [Atiqa Azza El Darman \(2019\)](#) highlights a significant increase in women's participation in the West Sumatra Regional House of Representatives due to affirmative policies that play a crucial role in encouraging women to compete for legislative seats. This has resulted in a consistent increase in women's representation year after year.

While these affirmative policies have shown some success, the persistent underrepresentation of women highlights a more fundamental issue regarding women's democratic rights. The right of women to participate in politics is an integral part of human rights. Law Number 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia 1984 Number 29, Supplement to State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3277) stipulates that the participation of women in politics necessitates legal protection to safeguard women from discrimination in all fields, including politics. The implementation of this law has led to the establishment of the National Commission on Violence Against Women as an independent body overseeing women's rights.

The role of the National Commission on Violence Against Women is to monitor and report various violations of women's human rights, provide knowledge about women's human rights, stimulate change and formulate policies as negotiators and mediators between the government and victimised communities and human rights defenders, emphasise the state's responsibility to uphold human rights and restore the rights of victims, and facilitate the development and strengthening of networks at local, national, regional, and international levels for the purpose of prevention, capacity building, handling, and elimination of all forms of violence against women.

In addition to formal legal frameworks and oversight bodies such as the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), practical strategies to increase women's participation and representation are also needed. In her research, [Atiqa Azza El Darman \(2019\)](#) explains that strategies for enhancing women's participation and representation in the legislature in West Sumatra can be implemented through communication strategies. The communication strategies employed include women's political communication and political party communication. In line with

West Sumatra Province Regional Regulation Number 7 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Government Affairs in the Field of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Article 7 Paragraph 1 states that local governments have a responsibility in empowering women in community organizations in the region.

METHODS

This scientific paper elucidates the integration of gender mainstreaming in enhancing the representation of women in legislative bodies, while endeavouring to address the issue of gender disparity to foster gender equality for sustainable development. This research is conducted by employing a descriptive qualitative method. This research design was chosen as appropriate for depicting the complex phenomena associated with culture, policy, and gender dynamics in depth. Sources are systematically selected based on their relevance to the research focus, covering the period from 2016 to 2024. The keywords used for searching academic databases (Google Scholar, national repositories) include "West Sumatra equality," "women's representation in West Sumatra," "women's legislative quotas," and "gender mainstreaming." The credibility of the research sources is assessed based on peer-review status, the reputation of the authors/institutions, and publication dates. Data extracted from these sources are analysed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying patterns, concepts, and recurring themes related to: (1) the level of women's representation, (2) identified barriers (cultural, structural, economic, political), (3) existing government strategies and policies (e.g., gender mainstreaming, affirmative action, special programmes), (4) the role of political parties and other institutions (e.g., Bundo Kanduang, NGOs), and (5) proposed solutions or alternative strategies. These themes are coded and synthesised to construct a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Specifically, the research is conducted in several steps. The first step involves a literature review on the concept of sustainable development within the framework of gender mainstreaming to enhance gender equality. The second step entails conducting secondary data studies by seeking information through books, scholarly journals, and government documents, including regulations and strategic plans, as well as other relevant sources concerning gender mainstreaming in the enhancement of women's representation in legislative bodies in West Sumatra. In essence, this constitutes a literature-based study. This research focuses on gender mainstreaming in the enhancement of women's representation in legislative bodies due to the fact that, to date, women's representation in the West Sumatra Parliament remains significantly low.

The limitations of this study encompass its sole reliance on secondary data, which may not fully capture nuanced individual experiences that could be obtained through primary methods such as

interviews. There is also the potential for bias in the selection or availability of published literature and official documents. Ethical considerations in the research are upheld through meticulous citation of all sources to avoid plagiarism and ensure academic integrity.

RESULT

Women's Representation in West Sumatra Province

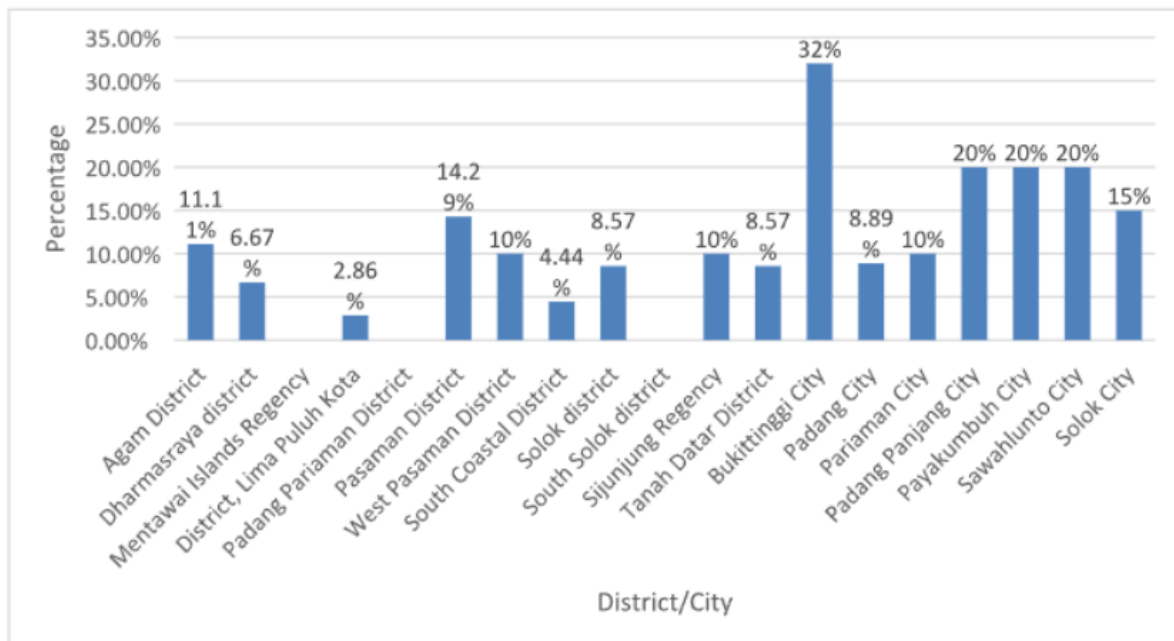
The representation of women in the legislative institutions of West Sumatra remains a complex issue, despite the implementation of affirmative policies aimed at enhancing women's political participation. The low level of female representation in legislative bodies constitutes a violation of women's fundamental democratic rights ([Darman, 2019](#)). This situation disregards the fundamental principles of democracy, which recognise the equal rights of all citizens to participate in the political process without discrimination based on gender. When women are not afforded equal opportunities to occupy legislative seats or run for public office, their fundamental rights, including the right to express opinions, the right to be elected, and the right to vote are effectively violated. This indicates an imbalance within the political system that should advocate for the principles of inclusivity and equality.

In a healthy democratic system, political participation should be a guaranteed right for all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, or social status. However, the reality still reveals significant disparities in the representation of women in legislative bodies due to structural, cultural, and social barriers that hinder women's optimal participation in politics. Women's right to engage in political processes is an integral component of human rights. Every woman should have equal access to candidacy in legislative bodies without discrimination or restrictions based on gender. It is crucial to understand that women's representation is not solely about quantity but also about the quality and influence they have in policy-making. When women successfully break through barriers in politics, they can bring a more holistic perspective to the formulation of fair and equitable policies in education, health, social protection, and economic empowerment.

In the political context of West Sumatra, which is still heavily influenced by patriarchal culture and traditional values, the role of women in the public sphere is often regarded as less significant. Although the prevailing culture in the Minangkabau society is a matrilineal kinship system, where women hold a higher status or occupy important positions in family and inheritance matters, this does not automatically elevate women's roles in politics. In fact, women's participation in politics tends to be limited, both in terms of quantity and quality. The representation of women in West Sumatra's legislature remains exceedingly low. Even though the national policy mandating a 30% quota for women in legislative candidacy has been implemented, this has not yet proven effective in addressing

the various challenges faced by women in the political arena. A significant challenge for West Sumatra is to ensure that these affirmative policies are implemented effectively and sustainably. This requires a commitment from the government, political parties, and all elements of society to create a political system that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of women.

Figure 2
Percentage of Women's Representation in Regency / City DPRD of West Sumatra Province in 2024-2029



Source: Results of Processed Data from the Decree of Members of the Regency / City DPRD of West Sumatra 2024-2029

Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of female representation among elected members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) in the districts and cities of West Sumatra Province for the period 2024-2029. The data highlights that the involvement of women in legislative roles remains considerably low, far below the minimum threshold of 30%. Only the city of Bukittinggi has achieved a 30% representation of women in the legislature, with a percentage of 32%. In fact, in three districts—Mentawai Islands, Padang Pariaman, and South Solok—there is no female representation in the legislature (0%). Nationally, the average representation of women in the legislature stands at 22.46%, whereas West Sumatra only averages 15.38%. This suggests limitations to the effectiveness of the quota framework in promoting equitable representation.

The low interest of women in becoming legislative members contrasts with their interest in politics. The desire to actively participate in politics is fundamentally similar between women and men. However, women do not occupy central positions. A greater number of qualified women in decision-making roles could better address the diverse needs of women. Nevertheless, it is a fact that no woman holds a legislative seat as a chairperson. Female candidates compete solely for positions

that do not carry strategic significance. Consequently, the representation of women in the legislature is inadequate in terms of both quantity and quality.

Beyond numerical representation, factors contributing to the limited involvement of women in politics in West Sumatra include financial constraints. It is well known that Minangkabau women possess specific legitimacy regarding property rights, including homes and land. However, the status of Minangkabau women within society has begun to undergo significant changes. Although Minangkabau women are respected within the cultural context, formal political decisions are often made by men. Women in Minangkabau are perceived as better suited to domestic roles than public roles, diminishing family support for their engagement in the political arena.

Furthermore, political parties in West Sumatra have yet to demonstrate strong involvement in empowering women. The political recruitment process often merely aims to meet quotas without considering the capacity and abilities of female candidates. This can result in situations where women entering the political sphere do not receive adequate support from their parties and the community. For instance, despite Emma Yohanna, Rahmi Brisma, and Betti Zulфина having substantial experience in politics, they still failed to win locally because the parties backing them provided insufficient campaign support. This has led to the emergence of the glass ceiling phenomenon, creating obstacles for women in politics. This phenomenon illustrates the existence of invisible barriers that prevent women from attaining the highest positions in politics, despite female candidates possessing competencies equivalent to their male counterparts. The primary cause is the entrenched gender stereotypes within society, where women are viewed as unsuitable for leadership in political contexts, particularly in regions heavily influenced by Islamic values, such as West Sumatra.

In areas that uphold Islamic values, the assertion "the imam is male" is often employed to disqualify women as potential leaders, implying that leaders must be capable of guiding both worldly and spiritual affairs. In Minangkabau, this role is traditionally associated with men. Political education also plays a significant role in diminishing Minangkabau women's interest in politics, as some members of society, including women, perceive politics as a discipline that is less engaging and incompatible with traditional female roles in Minangkabau. Additionally, within Minangkabau customs and culture, women are regarded as the honour of the family, and involvement in a conflict-ridden world is considered potentially damaging to that honour. Consequently, excessive participation in public activities is often viewed unfavourably by society; women may be perceived as violating social norms in Minangkabau, which expect women to fulfil vital roles confined to domestic responsibilities. This social stigma poses a barrier to Minangkabau women seeking to actively in politics.

Resistance to women's involvement in politics does not solely stem from society; it can also emerge from within the political system itself. Many parties that endorse female candidates do so superficially, without providing adequate support to these candidates. Numerous parties nominate women solely to fulfil administrative requirements, and it is rare for female candidates to secure positions that are conducive to winning elections.

The impact of the low involvement of women in politics is also due to policies that inadequately consider women's perspectives. Discriminatory policies against women frequently arise, and the specific needs of women in various fields, such as reproductive health, education, and protection from violence, are often inadequately accommodated. Yet, the role of women in politics is crucial to ensuring that policies are sensitive to women's needs. Moreover, the presence of women in politics is essential to ensure that policies reflect not only the voices of dominant groups but also encompass the needs and aspirations of marginalised groups, such as women, children, and indigenous communities.

Strategy and Policy Direction in Increasing Women's Representation

The enhancement of women's representation in legislative bodies is a significant issue currently faced by many nations, particularly those still grappling with gender disparities across various sectors, especially in politics. Therefore, creative and strategic measures are essential. Women's representation in politics is closely linked to the recognition of women's roles in society as a whole. When women are afforded equal standing, it reflects a shift in societal perspectives regarding gender roles. The issue at hand encompasses not only the provision of space for women to participate but also the transformation of the social structures underpinning such inequalities. These measures are not merely to comply with legal mandates but stem from a political awareness aimed at granting space and rights for women to fully actualise their political rights. The implementation of these creative measures will have a significant impact on enhancing the quality of democracy, diversifying viewpoints, and achieving more inclusive and sustainable policies. The strategies and policy directions adopted to achieve these objectives must be rooted in principles of equality and women's empowerment, while also considering the social, economic, and cultural contexts that may influence the political process.

To realise the enhancement of women's representation in legislative bodies requires more than mere quota policies or the fulfilment of legal formalities. Deeper and more sustainable steps must be taken to create tangible changes in political and social structures. The strategies devised should be underpinned by a profound political consciousness regarding the importance of providing greater space for women to actively participate in politics. This awareness must not only fulfil legal obligations but also ensure that women's representation can fully actualise their political rights, free from structural and cultural barriers that may constrain them.

In her research, [Atiqa Azza El Darman \(2019\)](#) explains that efforts to increase the participation and representation of women in the legislature in West Sumatra can be implemented through communication strategies. The communication strategies employed include women's political communication and political party communication ([Adeni & Harahap, 2017](#)). In practice, women's political communication in West Sumatra employs counter-communication strategies. This counter-communication can be categorised into three groups. Firstly, the counter-communication of gender mainstreaming aims to ensure women gain access, participate, and have equal control within the political realm. This aligns with the regional action plan of West Sumatra in the Sustainable Development Goals 2023-2026, which aims to strengthen institutions at the provincial and district/city levels to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of gender mainstreaming efforts. Secondly, efforts focus on promoting affirmative actions that ensure the 30% quota for women's representation is effectively utilised. Various activities that can encourage this include workshops, seminars, and scientific studies on affirmative action. Thirdly, implementing political education for women through organisations can encourage women to be more active and engaged in various public activities, particularly in the political sphere. By undertaking these initiatives, it is hoped that in the future, women will feel more empowered to express their aspirations by raising social issues, especially to enhance women's representation in politics.

Furthermore, the political communication strategy of political parties is a strategy that can be developed by political parties through messaging and media. In politics, messaging is understood as a form of guidance related to issues occurring within society. Political parties, as the primary channels for conveying the political aspirations of the public, including women, bear a significant responsibility in creating space for women to engage actively in the political process. Therefore, political parties must effectively communicate messages regarding the 30% representation of women in legislative bodies as compelling narratives. This way, the public will be encouraged to participate in the implementation process. Additionally, political parties need to establish communication through a form of cadre development to empower women. These messages should invite women to actively participate in politics, one way being through joining political parties.

The political communication strategy of political parties is closely related to political marketing, which encompasses product, promotion, price, and place. In this context, the application of political marketing concepts to female politicians aims to create a strong image and expand women's influence in politics, particularly in addressing the existing gender gaps within power structures. The product is defined as the political party that prepares competent female politicians for legislative roles. Political parties must ensure that the female politicians they endorse possess the competence and credibility to be trusted by the public. This includes expertise in policy-making,

mastery of public issues, and strong political communication skills. Preparing competent female politicians who are ready to contribute to the legislative process and decision-making in parliament will strengthen the political party's position while providing space for women to voice their opinions in policy-making.

Promotion in political marketing serves as a means to introduce female politicians and gain public recognition through various activities. This can be achieved through political activities involving women, including campaigns, public discussions, seminars, and other forums that attract public attention. The presence of female politicians in mass media, whether print, television, or social media, is also crucial for enhancing their visibility. This promotion aims to raise public awareness that women are equally capable of leadership as men and of addressing political issues with approaches sensitive to the diverse needs of society, including women and other vulnerable groups.

Price is defined as the economic support provided to female politicians to become legislators. This includes funding for campaign activities, as well as the provision of resources needed to enhance the competitiveness of female politicians in elections. Furthermore, political parties must ensure that female politicians have access to training that can enhance their political skills. Adequate economic support will help create equal opportunities for women to compete with male politicians, who often have greater financial backing.

Place, in this context, refers to providing a platform for female politicians to occupy strategic positions. This placement is not limited to legislative candidacies but also includes strategic positions within government structures, both at the regional and national levels, so that female politicians can effectively contribute to policy-making. Women need to be given opportunities to hold key positions that influence legislative and executive processes. This placement also means creating space for women to lead in political organisations and legislative bodies, ensuring that women have equal roles in decision-making processes related to social and economic development. The political marketing strategy aimed at enhancing women's representation in politics is not solely related to fulfilling quotas or formal requirements but also involves creating genuine opportunities for women to actively and sustainably participate in politics.

In addition to political communication strategies, enhancing women's representation can also leverage the cultural practices inherent in Minangkabau society, particularly by utilising the matrilineal system and social capital, such as extensive family networks and women's organisations like *Bundo Kanduang* (literally translated: the Biological Mother), party's wing organisations, and study groups. These networks have the potential to increase support and boost vote acquisition for female candidates. Historically, the Bundo Kanduang organisation existed solely at the individual or personal level. However, following the political reform at the regional level, the Bundo Kanduang

organisation began to be recognised as an institution representing women and could play a role in influencing policies established by the government. Furthermore, the opening of regulations related to Bundo Kanduang presents strategic opportunities to present female candidates in legislative bodies. These women's organisations can function to advocate for women's aspirations and bridge the representation or political participation of women.

Another strategy that can support women's representation in legislative bodies is through collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, and research institutions to establish strong relationships, gain support, enrich insights, and provide broader perspectives in the formulation of gender-based regional regulations. Collaboration with NGOs and academics can enhance women's capacity to create more inclusive and equitable policies. NGOs often possess direct knowledge of the challenges faced by marginalised groups, including women, as well as experience in advocating for their rights at the local level. In line with the Provincial Regulation of West Sumatra Number 7 of 2021 concerning the Administration of Government Affairs in the Field of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Article 7 Paragraph 1 states, "Women's Empowerment in Community Organisations is conducted by the Department," which clarifies that local governments have a responsibility for empowering women within community organisations in the region.

Lastly, strong legal protection for women in politics, such as protections against discrimination and political violence, is also identified as a crucial element. Law Number 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia Year 1984 Number 29, Supplement to the State Gazette of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3277) stipulates that the participation of women in politics necessitates legal protection to safeguard them from discrimination in all fields, including politics. The implementation of this law involves the establishment of the National Commission on Violence Against Women as an independent body that oversees women's rights. The role of the Commission is to monitor and report various violations of women's human rights; provide knowledge about women's human rights; stimulate change and policy formulation as negotiators and mediators between the government, victimised communities, and human rights defenders; emphasise the state's responsibility to uphold human rights and restore the rights of victims; and facilitate the development and strengthening of networks at local, national, regional, and international levels for the purposes of prevention, capacity building, handling, and eliminating all forms of violence against women.

DISCUSSION

The findings regarding the low representation of women in the legislative bodies of West Sumatra, which even reaches zero in several districts, indicate profound issues extending beyond the mere implementation of formal policies such as the 30% quota. Despite West Sumatra's unique matrilineal system, these findings demonstrate that the dominance of patriarchal culture within the realm of formal politics remains exceedingly strong. Social norms that prioritise male leadership in politics and restrict women's roles to the domestic sector appear to exert greater influence than women's status within the matrilineal customary structure when they enter the political arena. This creates a paradox where social recognition within customary practices does not automatically translate into formal political power.

The failure of affirmative action policies to significantly enhance the electability of women reflects a lack of substantive commitment from key actors, particularly political parties. The finding that parties often merely fulfil quota requirements administratively, without providing adequate financial, strategic, or placement support for female candidates, suggests that these quotas are not yet effective tools for internal party transformation. The phenomenon of the glass ceiling and the failure of experienced female politicians in regional elections further reinforce the analysis that structural and cultural barriers within the political system itself remain exceedingly high.

Various identified obstacles—ranging from financial constraints, gender stereotypes, lack of familial support, to systemic resistance—are interrelated and create an environment unconducive to women's political participation. The lack of interest in political education and social stigma also contributes to the low supply of female candidates who are willing and able to compete. The impact of this low representation, as identified in the findings, is the potential for policies that are less responsive to the specific needs of women and other marginalised groups.

The strategies that have been identified, such as communication strategies, the utilisation of social capital from Bundo Kanduang, and collaboration, offer potential pathways forward. However, the effectiveness of their implementation in the field needs to be questioned in the context of existing barriers. For instance, communication and political marketing strategies are unlikely to succeed without tangible changes in resource support (both financial and networking) from political parties. Similarly, the potential of Bundo Kanduang as political social capital requires transformative efforts for its role to transcend traditional customary functions and enter the realm of practical political support, a step that may face internal challenges within the organisation itself. Collaboration with NGOs and academics is crucial for capacity building. However, it must be ensured that the outcomes of such collaborations can be translated into real political influence and effective advocacy.

Therefore, enhancing women's representation in legislative bodies requires more than mere quota policies or the fulfilment of legal formalities. More profound and sustainable measures must be

taken to create genuine change in political and social structures. The strategies designed must be grounded in a deep political awareness regarding the importance of providing greater space for women to actively participate in politics. This awareness is not only to meet legal obligations but also to ensure that women's representation can fully actualise their political rights, free from structural or cultural barriers that may limit them. To realize greater female involvement in politics, systematic changes to existing political and policy frameworks are necessary.

Firstly, political parties need to commit to going beyond administrative requirements and providing more substantial support to female candidates, including leadership training, access to resources, and opportunities for strategic positions within party structures. Secondly, stronger affirmative policies, such as the provision of women's quotas that enable women to occupy central positions in legislative bodies, must be reinforced and better implemented. It is essential to enhance political education and training for women so that they can compete with men in the challenging political arena.

Adequate financial support, effective political campaigning, and extensive networks are also critical factors in ensuring that women can succeed in elections and attain leadership positions. Furthermore, there needs to be a profound social change within society to address the patriarchal norms that continue to hinder women's roles in politics. Public awareness campaigns that educate the public about women's representation in politics and its impact on more inclusive and sustainable policies are necessary. Increasing women's representation in legislative bodies is a significant issue faced by many countries, particularly those still grappling with gender disparities across various fields, especially politics. Therefore, it requires creative and strategic measures.

Women's representation in politics is also closely related to the recognition of women's roles in society as a whole. When women are given an equal place, it reflects a change in societal perspectives regarding gender roles. The issues raised concern not merely providing space for women to participate but also about altering the social structures that underpin such inequalities. These steps are not only to comply with legal demands but also are grounded in a political consciousness aimed at providing space and rights for women to fully actualise their political rights. The enactment of these creative measures will significantly impact the enhancement of democratic quality, diversity of perspectives, and the achievement of more inclusive and sustainable policies. The strategies and policy directions implemented to achieve these objectives must be rooted in principles of equality and women's empowerment while considering the social, economic, and cultural contexts that can influence political processes.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the representation of women in legislative bodies in West Sumatra remains significantly low. In support of gender equality, the Provincial Government of West Sumatra has implemented various strategies aimed at enhancing the representation of women in legislative institutions. Although there is a policy, namely affirmative action, which mandates a minimum of 30% female representation within political parties, obstacles such as patriarchal culture, gender stereotypes, and insufficient financial support continue to impede women's participation in politics. This is evidenced by the low involvement of women in the elections for members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) in West Sumatra, with only one city, Bukittinggi, achieving a female representation exceeding 30%. The prevailing societal norm that increasingly support male leadership in the political sphere is a primary factor dissuading the electorate from choosing female candidates.

To enhance women's participation in legislative bodies, proposed strategies include gender mainstreaming, affirmative action, leadership training for female legislative candidates, financial assistance during campaigning, political party communication to introduce and support female candidates, and collaboration with women's organisations such as Bundo Kanduang and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Legal protection for women in politics is also deemed essential to prevent gender-based discrimination. Policies supporting gender equality must be accompanied by stringent implementation to ensure that women can access political spaces safely and without fear of discrimination. Despite existing advancements, these barriers still require addressing to achieve improved gender equality in West Sumatra.

Consequently, the government can alter the prevailing stereotypes within society that deem male leaders more suitable than female counterparts and support gender mainstreaming through increased female participation in legislative bodies in the Province of West Sumatra. The implications of this research are not only pertinent to West Sumatra but potentially applicable to other Indonesian provinces, particularly in areas with unique cultural contexts or in matrilineal societies elsewhere, while considering each local context. Thus, this study offers a comprehensive framework that integrates structural, cultural, and institutional analyses to understand and address gender disparities within the legislative domain. The researcher suggests further research exploring aspects potentially overlooked in this research, including a comparison of the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming strategies in matrilineal and patrilineal provinces to identify best practices and evaluate internal party studies in preparing female candidates.

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