



Women's Representation in Policy Making at the Local Level in Indonesia

Ach. Apriyanto Romadhan¹, Iradhad Taqwa Sihidi¹, Hevi Kurnia Hardini², Eva Ermylina³

¹Department of Government Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang

²Australian Maritime College, University of Tasmania, Australia

³National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan

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CORRESPONDENCE

Name: Ach. Apriyanto Romadhan

Email:

achapriyantoromadhan@umm.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to examine the substantive political representation of women in the Malang City Regional Representative Council (DPRD) during the policy-making process of the Draft Regional Regulation (Ranperda) on the 2022–2042 Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW). Using a qualitative research design with a literature review and document analysis covering DPRD minutes, the draft Ranperda, and faction structure, this study explores how gender, educational attainment, and institutional hierarchy shape the substantive participation of female legislators. The findings reveal that although women's descriptive representation in the Malang City DPRD has increased to 26.66%, their involvement in strategic decision-making remains limited. Male legislators continue to dominate influential positions such as faction chairperson, advisor, spokesperson, and membership in Special Committees (Pansus), leaving women largely confined to administrative or peripheral roles. Despite showing a higher attendance rate (93%) compared to men (83%), the substantive contribution of female legislators is significantly lower (41.67% vs. 75.76%). Educational background enhances engagement among female legislators, yet gendered structures and cultural norms continue to constrain their influence. This study concludes that women's representation in Malang's DPRD remains paradoxical, as educational advantages enhance engagement but structural and cultural barriers continue to limit their substantive policy influence.

INTRODUCTION

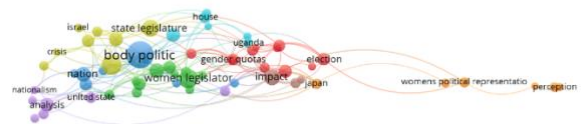
Women's political representation has been a major concern in contemporary political science. Early studies highlighted how states, international institutions, and civil society movements promoted affirmative action policies and quotas aimed at increasing women's representation in legislative bodies (Erel & Acik, 2020; Lebedeva & Stolyarova, 2020). This attention has intensified with global commitments enshrined in various international instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. Thus, women's involvement in politics is not only a domestic issue but also a global one that determines the quality of democracy and governance.

Despite this, women's political representation still faces various structural and cultural barriers. Patriarchal norms, clientelism practices, and gender-biased internal political party structures often hinder women's active participation in electoral politics and decision-making (Al-Lawati, 2022; Hillman, 2017; Matloob et al., 2021; Perdana & Hillman, 2020; Wang & Muriaas, 2019). Despite these obstacles, efforts to increase women's representation have shown positive progress.

According to a report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU Parline, 2025) women's representation in global parliaments has increased by 1.8% in the past five years. Nearly all regions of the world have experienced significant increases, except the Pacific. In the Americas and Europe, for example, electoral systems, quota implementation, and institutional design have been shown to have an impact on increasing women's representation.

A crucial question that arises is the extent to which women's presence in legislative institutions influences public policy processes and outcomes. A bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer (Figure 1) of 351 articles in the Scopus database over

the past five years shows that studies on women's political representation remain fragmented into several large clusters with dominant topics such as body politics, state legislature, women legislators, gender quotas, and elections. Existing research focuses more on the relationship between women's descriptive representation and electoral systems, quotas, and their impact on election outcomes and the dynamics of political institutions (Abdelgawad & Hassan, 2023; Perdana & Hillman, 2020). These clusters generally emphasize structural and institutional discussions, such as electoral systems, the implementation of gender quotas, and the context of specific countries such as the United States, Israel, Uganda, and Japan (Habersack, 2025;



Itzkovitch-Malka & Porzycki, 2025; Osawa & Yoon, 2019).

Figure 1. Analysis of Women's Representation Studies

However, this visualization reveals a significant gap. The themes related to "women's political representation" and "perception" are peripheral, indicating that studies on the perceptions, experiences, and substantive roles of women

legislators in the policy-making process are still very limited in Western democracies, where they are considered to be positively correlated with their influence in the decision-making process (Wackerle & Castanho Silva, 2023), contributing to improved decision quality, policy effectiveness, governance efficiency, and the legitimacy of political decisions (Abdelgawad & Hassan, 2023; Erbilin & Uysal, 2023). Furthermore, women's involvement in politics has been shown to have a positive impact on economic performance, reduced corruption, energy sector development, and improved education and health quality (Forman-Rabinovici & Sommer, 2019; Pereira & Fernandez-Vazquez, 2023; Salamon, 2023).

However, the Asian context, including Southeast Asia, exhibits different dynamics. The character of democracy in this region is strongly influenced by unique social, cultural, and historical factors (Tyson, 2018). Research shows that increasing the number of women in parliament does not always correspond to increased substantive representation (Gill & Joshi, 2024; Hohmann, 2020; Mechkova et al., 2024; Weeks & Masala, 2023). This situation is even more pronounced in Indonesia, where patriarchal culture remains deeply entrenched (Aspinall et al., 2021; Perdana & Hillman, 2020). These obstacles make it difficult for many female legislators to carry out their representative role, even after successfully securing parliamentary seats (Anzia & Berry, 2011; Beckwith, 2007). In other words, the presence of women does not necessarily guarantee substantive change in public policy.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to fill the gap between descriptive and substantive representation of women at the subnational legislative level, particularly in the Indonesian context. Research on women's representation in Indonesia has largely focused on the national level, particularly on issues of access to parliament and the implementation of gender quotas (Perdana & Hillman, 2020; Prihatini, 2022). Meanwhile, at the subnational level, research has focused more on the composition of women holding strategic positions within regional legislative structures (Mardiah et al., 2018), but there is still limited evidence regarding the effectiveness of their role in the policy-making process. However, at the subnational level, women's involvement has a more tangible impact because it is directly related to public policies that address the daily needs of the community.

A similar situation is also evident in the performance of legislative institutions in Indonesia. Although the proportion of women in the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) increased from 17.3% in 2014, 20.5% in 2019, to 22.1% in 2024, legislative performance has actually experienced a significant decline. Data shows that the performance of the National Legislation Program (Prolegnas) drafting fell 27% in the 2010–2014 period, 19% in 2014–2019, and 10.26% in 2019–2024 (Institute, 2019; IPU Parline, 2025; Kompas, 2024). At the regional level, the Malang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) faces a similar situation. In the last three years (2021–2023), the DPRD's legislative performance has not met its targets. In fact, in 2022, the performance achievement was only 9%, indicating serious obstacles. Although the number of women in the Malang DPRD increased from 24.44% (2014–2019) to 26.66% (2019–2024), this increase in numbers has not been in line with an increase in the quality of legislative performance (BPS, 2025).

Legislative structures that emphasize experience, hierarchy, and seniority often create additional barriers to women's

substantive participation (Chaney, 2016). These multiple barriers make it difficult for women legislators to truly influence the legislative process. Furthermore, literature examining the relationship between gender, education level, and job hierarchy with women's involvement in the policy-making cycle in Indonesia is still very limited. Most research is quantitative and has not examined in depth the processes of deliberation, knowledge sharing, and attendance at policy forums (Erikson & Josefsson, 2021).

Thus, this research not only expands the international literature on women's political representation, which has so far focused on the national level and the context of developed countries, but also provides an empirical contribution in understanding the dynamics of women's substantive representation at the regional legislative level in developing countries with a strong patriarchal culture such as Indonesia.

From a theoretical perspective, this study seeks to strengthen the link between the theory of political representation and the concept of governance inclusion (Craye & Funtowicz, 2009; Neyişci, 2025) in explaining the substantive role of women in legislative institutions. Political representation concerns not only physical presence (descriptive representation), but also how representatives act in the interests of constituents (substantive representation) (Hohmann, 2020). In the context of inclusive governance, substantive representation is a measure of the extent to which female political actors are able to influence the process and substance of policy (Rayment & McCallion, 2024).

Based on these limitations, this study offers novelty by examining the substantive participation of women legislators in the Malang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in the formulation of the Draft Regional Regulation (Ranperda) for the 2022–2042 Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW). The research focuses on how educational background, position in the institutional hierarchy, and level of attendance at meetings influence their role in the policy-making cycle. Furthermore, this study also identifies structural and cultural barriers that can hinder women's active involvement in the legislative process.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to analyze the extent to which female legislators in the Malang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) were substantively involved in the drafting of the 2022–2042 Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) and the factors influencing this. This study uses an analytical framework based on the theory of substantive representation with three main indicators: Deliberative participation, namely the level of presence and contribution of women in policy discussion forums; Substantive influence, namely the extent to which the views or proposals of female legislators are accommodated in the substance of the policy; Structural and cultural constraints, which include the hierarchy of positions, patriarchal norms, and institutional obstacles in the legislative process. By using this framework, this study not only closes the empirical gap in the Indonesian context but also fills the theoretical gap in the literature on the relationship between substantive representation, institutional design, and local political culture in developing countries. Conceptually, this study contributes to the development of a theory of political representation that is more contextual and sensitive to non-Western socio-cultural structures, especially in the context of developing countries that face strong patriarchal cultural challenges. Thus, the results of this study not only have implications for strengthening local democracy in Indonesia, but also provide insights for global efforts to realize gender equality

in politics and public decision-making, particularly in designing affirmative policies that not only increase the number of female legislators but also strengthen their capacity and substantive influence in the formulation of public policy.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative method with a literature review approach. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to interpret the meaning, interaction patterns, and forms of substantive participation recorded in policy documents and institutional archives that are not accessible through quantitative approaches. Qualitative document analysis is also relevant in the context of this research because it provides a systematic framework for examining the content, context, and implications of policies based on official textual evidence, without relying on the subjective perceptions of respondents. Therefore, this method is suitable for identifying how female legislators contribute to the content and direction of regional spatial planning policy.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from minutes of meetings discussing the Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) draft regulation, documented by the Malang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) Secretariat. Secondary data include the draft Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) 2022–2042, a list of DPRD members and their personal and political characteristics (name, education level, party affiliation, position in factions and special committees, and meeting attendance), and various official documents related to the legislative process and spatial planning. The document selection criteria are directly relevant to the formulation or discussion process of the 2022 RTRW Draft Regional Regulation and the credibility of the sources (official DPRD documents or archives authorized by relevant institutions).



Figure 2. Research Methodology Flowchart

Through qualitative document analysis, data were collected from the Malang City DPRD archives and official publications, then selected based on their relevance and credibility in capturing the substantive involvement of female legislators. Using NVivo, thematic analysis was applied through open and axial coding consistent with the indicators of substantive representation, namely deliberative participation, substantive influence, and structural and cultural constraints. Key themes and relationships between legislators' education, institutional positions, and attendance were mapped to answer the research objectives and develop policy insights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legislator Educational Background

Descriptive statistics indicate that both female and male legislators are predominantly educated at the bachelor's level. However, the proportion of females with a bachelor's level (50%) is slightly higher than that of males (42.42%). Males generally have a higher distribution of education, including Master's (27.27%) and Doctoral (9.09%) levels, compared to females, who have achieved Master's (16.66%) levels. Notably, no female legislators have achieved a Doctoral level.

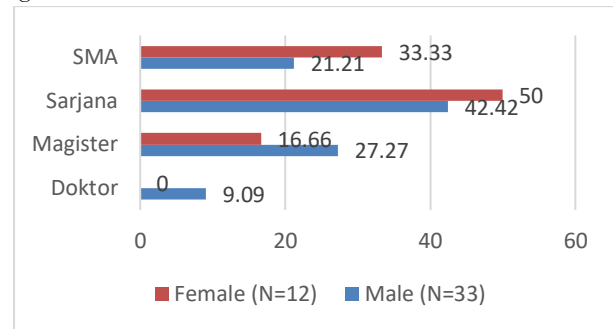


Figure 3. Education Level of Malang City DPRD Legislators Based on Gender

Figure 3 shows that two-thirds (66.66%) of female legislators in the Malang City DPRD have completed higher education—either a bachelor's or master's degree—indicating a relatively strong academic base for women in local politics. However, the majority (33.33%) of female legislators only have a high school education. This pattern suggests that access to legislative office is not solely determined by academic achievement, but can be influenced by factors such as party strength, local popularity, or representation quotas.

A comparative analysis of educational attainment also shows that male legislators are more likely to hold advanced degrees, with 27.27% holding a Master's degree and 9.09% holding a Doctorate. In contrast, only 16.66% of female legislators hold a Master's degree, and none hold a Doctorate. The fact that no female legislators hold a Doctorate underscores the structural gap in access to elite education. This strengthens the argument that women's entry into legislative institutions is not solely determined by academic capital, but also by non-academic factors such as representation quotas (Perdana & Hillman, 2020), the strength of political networks, and local socio-cultural bases (Aspinall et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the fact that two-thirds of female legislators are tertiary educated indicates a shift towards improving the quality of women's representation in local politics. This supports the argument (Martínez-Córdoba et al., 2023) about substantive representation, stating that the better women's educational background, the greater their chances of effectively articulating public interests. Thus, while there remains a gap in elite degree attainment, this data demonstrates the potential for strengthening the capacity of female legislators in local policy formulation, particularly on issues requiring technical understanding such as spatial planning, planning, and budgeting.

These findings highlight that at the regional level, women still face barriers in accessing postgraduate education, which can reduce their political bargaining power. However, the relatively high prevalence of women with undergraduate degrees indicates a qualitative capital that can be further developed. This opens up space for further research on how educational capital interacts

with party strategies, quotas, and local dynamics in shaping patterns of women's representation in regional parliaments.

Legislator Political Party Affiliation

Women's representation in local politics is a crucial indicator of the success of an inclusive democracy. Figure 4 depicts the distribution of Malang City's legislative members by gender and political party affiliation, focusing on the extent to which parties contribute to women's representation in the legislature.

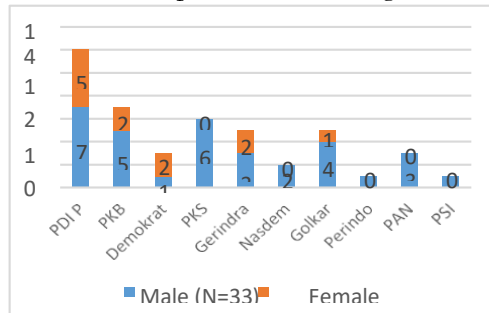


Figure 4. Political Party Affiliation Based on Gender

Political affiliation plays a key role in determining women's inclusion in regional parliaments. Figure 4 shows that women's representation in the Malang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) remains concentrated among certain parties. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), for example, has the highest number of female legislators—5 out of a total of 12—making it not only the dominant party in terms of total seats (12 members), but also a central actor in advancing women's representation in the city. This aligns with research (Matloob et al., 2021), which emphasizes the importance of party gatekeepers as key actors in determining the extent to which women can access legislative candidacy. Large parties with strong structures, such as PDI-P, generally have greater capacity to promote relatively gender-inclusive internal policies.

The Demokrat Party also exhibits a high percentage of female representation, with two women and one man among its members—making it 66.7% female. While the party's seat count is relatively small, the data confirms that party size does not always correlate with female representation. This supports the argument (Habersack, 2025) about the variation in party strategies in implementing gender quotas or promoting female candidates, with certain parties being more progressive even if they do not dominate electorally.

These findings confirm that variations in women's representation at the local level are not solely influenced by national quota policies, but are largely determined by the strategies and orientations of political parties themselves. In other words, women's representation in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) reflects not only the effects of formal regulations but also the result of internal party dynamics—from candidate recruitment processes to ballot number assignment mechanisms. This opens up further analysis of how the combination of party ideology, organizational structure, and electoral strategy influences women's chances of being elected at the regional level.

Legislator Faction Position

The six factions in the Malang City DPRD, namely the PDIP Perjuangan (PDIP) Faction, the National Awakening Party (PKB) Faction, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) Faction, the

Gerindra Party Faction, the Golkar Party Faction, and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Peace Faction, men dominate all core faction positions, such as Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and Secretary of the Faction. Based on Figure 5, although women are involved in these positions (one person per position), the proportion remains low, at around 16-17%. The positions of Faction Treasurer and Deputy Faction Treasurer show relatively higher female involvement. Women fill 2 of the 5 Faction Treasurer positions. The only Deputy Faction Treasurer is a woman. This suggests a tendency to place women in administrative or supporting roles, rather than as main decision-makers.

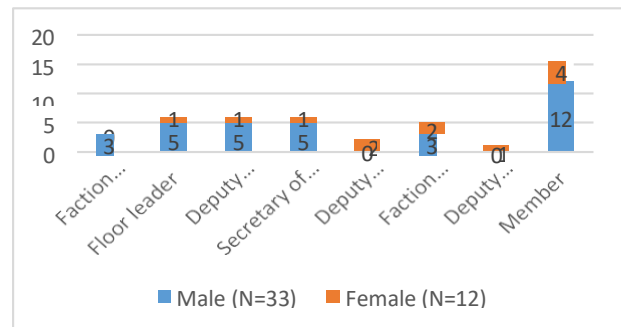


Figure 5. Distribution of Faction Positions Based on Gender

Findings from the distribution of faction positions in the Malang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) confirm a pattern of gender segregation in political leadership. Although women are present within the faction structure, their involvement tends to be concentrated in administrative positions such as treasurer or deputy treasurer, while core positions that determine the faction's strategic direction (chair, deputy chair, secretary, and advisor) are dominated by men. This pattern is consistent with the literature on the gendered division of labor in politics, where women are more often placed in supporting roles than decision-making roles (Lebedeva & Stolyarova, 2020).

This research provides empirical evidence at the local level that barriers to women's representation lie not only in the number of seats, but also in the internal distribution of power within political factions. Thus, this analysis emphasizes the importance of shifting the focus of studies on women's representation from mere electability to the quality of the distribution of strategic positions within legislative institutions. This opens up space for further study on how internal faction mechanisms and institutional norms can create a 'political glass ceiling' for female legislators.

Women's Representation in the Draft Regional Regulation Discussion Committee

The fact that 25% of the members of the ordinary faction are women also highlights the contradiction between presence and influence. While women are present in the structure, this presence does not automatically translate into political power. This is reflected in the absence of women on the Special Committee (Pansus) for the Draft Regional Regulation (Perda) on Spatial Planning (RTRW) for Malang City. Special Committees (Pansus) are non-permanent support bodies for the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), formed to discuss specific issues and established by a DPRD decision with the approval of a Plenary Session. Based on Malang City DPRD Decree Number 172/50/35.7.3.200/2022, dated October 22, 2022,

the entire committee, including the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and members, does not consist of women. A similar situation also occurs in the appointment of faction spokespeople in the DPRD.

Table 1. Spokesperson for the Faction in the Malang City RTRW Draft Regional Regulation Formulation Meeting

No	Fraction	Position	Gender
1	PDIP Struggle (PDIP) Faction	Secretary of Faction	Male
2	National Awakening Party (PKB) Faction	Advisor of Faction	Male
3	Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) Faction	Secretary of Faction	Male
4	Gerindra Party Faction	Chairman of the Faction	Male
5	Golkar Party Faction	Deputy Chairman of Faction	Male
6	Indonesian Peaceful Democratic Party Faction	Secretary of Faction	Male

Source: Document of the minutes of the plenary meeting to convey the general views of the Malang City RTRW faction, Monday, October 10, 2022

Women face barriers to equal access to decision-making because strategic positions also affect their effective involvement in the council apparatus, their right to speak or influence faction dynamics, and their role in policy initiation or formulation. Based on Table 1, of the six factions that presented general views, three factions were represented by the secretaries of the PDIP, PKS, and Damai Demokrasi Indonesia factions; the Gerindra faction chair represented one faction; one faction was represented by the deputy chair of the Golkar faction; and the PKB faction advisor represented one faction. The majority of factions appointed internal structural officials (secretaries and chairs) as official spokespeople in the public policy formulation process. All faction spokesperson positions were filled by men, with no female representation. This indicates that gender inequality exists in local political structures, particularly in decision-making at the faction level.

Level of Presence and Substantive Role of Women in Drafting Regional Regulations

The level of attendance by parliamentarians at each meeting to discuss the draft regional regulation can be observed through the five stages of the meeting. The first meeting was held on Monday, October 24, 2024, to discuss the Submission of the Work Report of the Special Committee regarding the draft regional regulation for the Malang City Spatial Plan for 2022-2024. The second meeting was held on Monday, October 10, 2024, for the submission of the General Views of the Malang City DPRD Factions on the Draft Regional Regulation for the Malang City Spatial Plan 2022-2042. The third meeting was held on Wednesday, October 12, 2024, for the Submission of the Mayor's Response to the Factions' Views on the Draft Regional Regulation for the Malang City Spatial Plan for 2022-2024. The fourth meeting on Monday, October 24, 2024, Submission of the Work Results Report of the Special Committee for Discussion of the Malang City RTRW Draft Regional Regulation for 2022-2024 and the last meeting on Tuesday, October 25, 2024, regarding the Submission of the Final Opinion of the Faction on the Discussion of the Draft Regional Regulation on the Malang City RTW for 2022-2024

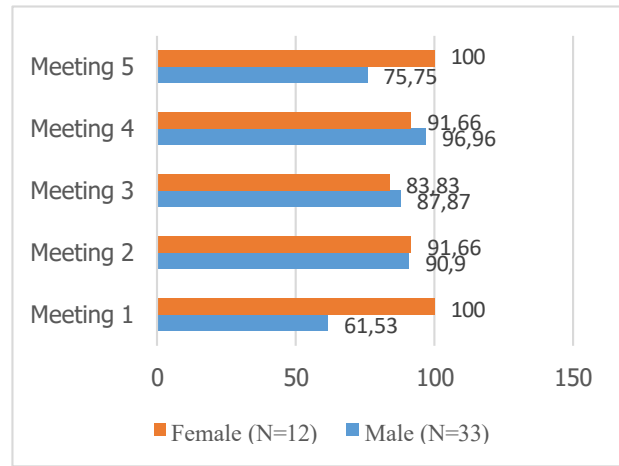


Figure 6. Attendance Level of Malang City DPRD Members

Source: Document of the minutes of the plenary meeting to convey the general views of the Malang City RTRW faction

Figure 6 shows the striking absence of female legislators in the Special Committee (Pansus) established for the RTRW policy. Although women constitute more than a quarter of the DPRD's members, none were included in the Pansus, which is tasked with drafting one of the city's most important planning documents. This complete absence illustrates a profound barrier to substantive representation, suggesting that the elected presence of women has not translated into institutional influence in strategic legislative functions.

This situation directly reflects the assertion (Beckwith, 2007) that descriptive representation—merely being elected—is insufficient to ensure policy impact, especially when informal power structures dominate the appointment of influential roles. When women are systematically excluded from committees that determine legislative substance, their potential to effectively influence policy outcomes is diminished.

Ironically, this exclusion contradicts data showing that female legislators consistently exhibit higher attendance rates than male legislators. Women recorded an average attendance rate of 93.33%, compared to 82.60% for men. Their attendance peaked at 100% during meetings 1 and 5, and never dropped below 83.33%, even in the session with the lowest attendance (meeting 3). Meanwhile, male attendance ranged from a low of 61.53% in meeting 1 to a high of 96.96% in meeting 4.

These figures indicate that female legislators demonstrate stronger commitment and institutional consistency in carrying out their legislative duties, despite their structural exclusion from influential positions. The gap between women's dedication and their marginalization from high-level forums reflects a systemic under-appreciation of their political contributions. To improve gender equality in policymaking, institutions must revise committee selection mechanisms to ensure inclusive representation based not only on party negotiations but also on proven achievements and engagement.

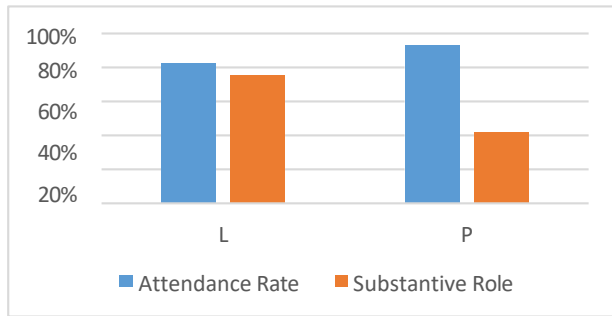


Figure 7. Comparison of Presence Level and Substantive Role

Figure 7 further illustrates the gap between women's presence and influence in policymaking. Although female legislators had a higher attendance rate (93%) than male legislators (83%), their substantive participation—measured by verbal contributions and engagement with regulatory content—was lower, at only 41.67%, compared to 75.76% for men. This finding highlights the paradox of political representation. Women's presence in legislative institutions stops at the level of descriptive representation, without translating into substantive representation that allows them to influence strategic policy direction. This is consistent with (Beckwith, 2007) finding that descriptive representation does not automatically translate into substantive representation. This finding differs slightly from previous studies linking higher female representation to increased legislative effectiveness (Abdelgawad & Hassan, 2023; Kanthak & Woon, 2015; Martínez-Córdoba et al., 2023).

One possible explanation is the absence of women in faction spokesperson roles. Despite being faction members, no women were appointed as official speakers in RTRW discussions. This absence represents a form of discursive marginalization, where women are excluded from the rhetorical arena of policymaking. Women tend to be more effective when given equal opportunities. Research findings suggest that unequal structural opportunities actually limit that effectiveness (Kanthak & Woon, 2015).

Wackerle & Castanho Silva (Wackerle & Castanho Silva, 2023) argue that rhetorical presence is as important as formal inclusion; without the opportunity to publicly voice their positions, women remain politically invisible. Therefore, efforts to increase women's influence should focus not only on the number or membership of committees, but also on enabling their full participation in deliberative forums.

Policy Issues in the Discussion of the RTRW Regional Regulation

Based on the meeting minutes of the Regional Spatial Planning Regulation (Perda RTRW), six strategic issues are the focus of discussion among members of the Malang City DPRD, namely policy integration, spatial planning, service infrastructure, spatial planning supervision, disaster mitigation, and participation. Spatial planning is the issue that attracts the most attention overall (62.22%), with a strong dominance of male legislators. Meanwhile, the issue of community participation is the issue that receives the least attention (11.11%).

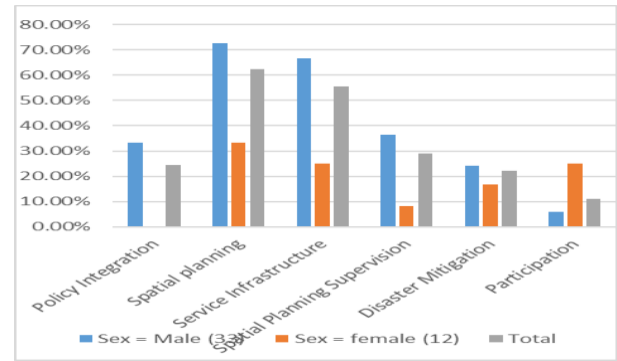


Figure 8. Gender Involvement in Policy Issues

Figure 8 shows that male legislators have significant attention to policy integration issues, while women show no interest at all. This indicates a gender gap in the perception of the importance of cross-sector policy coordination. Service infrastructure is a significant concern for men, but only a quarter of women share the same concern. This could be due to differences in perception or priority of physical service needs in urban areas.

Interestingly, female legislators demonstrated higher concern over participation-related issues, suggesting that they bring unique priorities and community-oriented perspectives to policymaking. This supports findings by Mechkova (Mechkova et al., 2024), who argue that women often champion policies focused on inclusive development and democratic responsiveness. However, the continued marginalization of women in substantive discussions—even when their attendance is consistently higher—signals a disconnect between presence and influence.

As Hohmann (Hohmann, 2020) emphasizes, increasing women's representation does not automatically translate into policy impact, especially when male-dominated norms persist and rhetorical opportunities are limited. Thus, capacity-building interventions and gender-sensitive institutional reforms are necessary to empower female legislators to actively shape spatial policy frameworks and other complex policy sectors. This also highlights the urgency of institutional mechanisms that not only open the door to women's formal participation but also equip them to exercise substantive influence across all stages of policymaking.

Gender Participation by Education Level in Policy Making.

At the undergraduate level, male legislators (15) demonstrated strong dominance across all issues, particularly on Policy Integration (55%) and Spatial Planning Oversight (45%). Women (6) were also active, with a more balanced approach to stakeholder participation and spatial planning oversight, accounting for approximately 40%. At the postgraduate level, male legislators (8) demonstrated a relatively even distribution across the five aspects, with little emphasis on policy integration. Meanwhile, female legislators (2) focused on stakeholder participation and service infrastructure. Across educational levels, the higher the educational level, the greater the attention paid to multiple aspects, rather than a single issue. This underscores the importance of undergraduate education as a vital foundation for meaningful public engagement.

Disaster mitigation and spatial planning patterns tend to receive little attention across all groups. This situation indicates a gap in awareness of spatial risks and the need for preventative spatial management. This lack of attention to mitigation can be a weakness in long-term spatial planning.

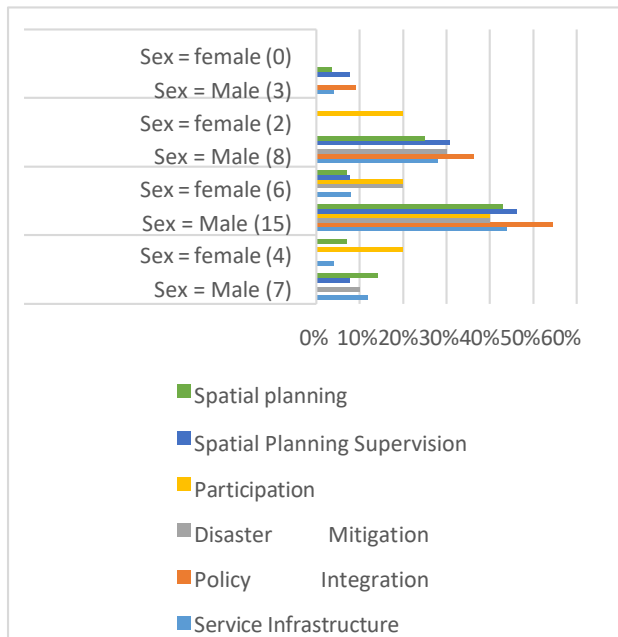


Figure 9. Gender Participation based on Education Level

Figure 9 shows that educational background influences the policy orientation of male and female legislators. At the undergraduate level, male legislators (15) dominated almost all issues, particularly policy integration (55%) and spatial oversight (45%). Meanwhile, female legislators (6) adopted a more balanced approach, focusing on stakeholder participation and spatial oversight, each with approximately 40%. This suggests that, despite their smaller numbers, women at this level demonstrate a more inclusive and participatory approach to policy issues.

At the Master's level, male legislators (8) showed relatively even attention across five policy areas, with little emphasis on policy integration. Conversely, female legislators (2) concentrated more on issues of participation and public service infrastructure. This pattern suggests that the higher the level of education, the broader the attention to various strategic issues. This finding supports a study Acheampong (Acheampong et al., 2024) which emphasized that higher education broadens cognitive capacity and cross-sectoral perspectives, thereby strengthening substantive engagement.

Gender Participation by Position in Policy Making

Based on Figure 10, spatial planning supervision is the most dominant aspect with the highest contribution from almost all positions (especially the Chairperson, Members, and Vice Chairperson) with details of the Chairperson with five contributions, members with five contributions, vice chairperson and secretary: each with four contributions, advisor and treasurer: each with three contributions. The Spatial Planning Pattern also has a high value, with a peak at the position of the vice chairperson, who made five contributions, and the secretary, who made four contributions.

Urban infrastructure exhibits a wide distribution, with the maximum contributions coming from the chair and members (three contributions each). Policy integration, disaster mitigation, and stakeholder participation tend to be lower and evenly distributed across all positions, with most values ranging from 0 to 2 contributions.

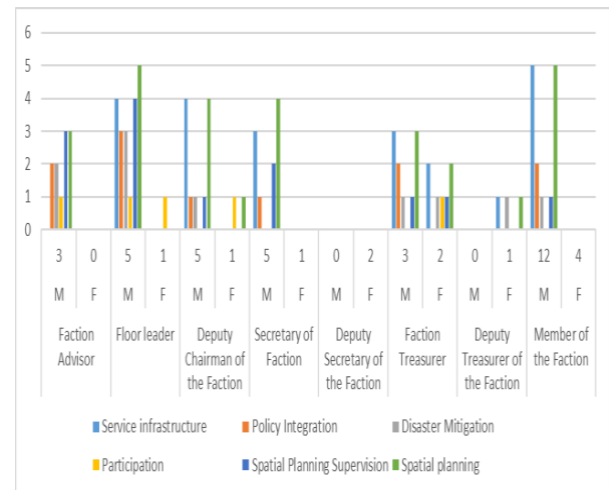


Figure 10. Relationship between position and contribution to policy

Figure 8 reveals how faction positions and education levels jointly influence legislators' substantive engagement. Female legislators who hold at least a Master's degree tend to be more visible in public service and participation-related issues, aligning with Mechkova (Mechkova et al., 2024), who found that women in parliament, particularly in leadership roles, are more likely to champion inclusive and participatory policy agendas. In total, 66.66% of female legislators in Malang's DPRD hold structural positions in factions, including roles such as chair, deputy chair, secretary, deputy secretary, treasurer, and deputy treasurer. Despite this, only five out of eight (62.5%) of these women actively participate in policy formulation. Notably, women in strategic roles—such as chair, deputy chair, treasurer, and deputy treasurer—tend to be more active in certain policy areas, while those in secretarial roles contribute less. This supports the argument by (Anzia & Berry, 2011) that when women hold office, they tend to outperform their male counterparts, particularly when placed in influential positions. On the male side, 21 of 33 legislators (85.71%) hold structural faction roles. Among them, 90.47% are active in policy processes, especially those occupying roles like advisor, chair, deputy chair, and secretary. Interestingly, some male members without formal leadership roles also participate actively in infrastructure and spatial planning discussions, influenced by their academic backgrounds—three having bachelor's degrees and one holding a master's degree.

This pattern suggests that strategic positions play a significant role in guiding policy focus. An interesting finding is that women holding strategic positions such as chairperson, vice chairperson, and treasurer demonstrated higher substantive participation than those in administrative positions (secretary). This pattern supports the argument (Kanthak & Woon, 2015) that when women are given the opportunity to hold positions of influence, they often work harder and achieve higher performance than men, both because they face greater expectations and because they are motivated to demonstrate their political capacity.

These findings empirically demonstrate how the interaction between structural position, gender, and educational background shapes patterns of substantive participation in local policymaking. By highlighting that women can only demonstrate high performance when placed in strategic positions, this study strengthens the argument that access to positions of influence is a crucial prerequisite for strengthening women's substantive

representation. This opens up space for more gender-sensitive internal faction reforms, so that the distribution of positions takes into account not only political negotiations but also legislators' track records and professional capacities.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that women's representation in the Malang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) remains paradoxical, visible in numbers but limited in influence. Despite higher attendance and educational attainment compared to their male counterparts, women's participation in strategic decision-making is constrained. Their absence from the Special Committee on Spatial Planning (RTRW) and limited presence in faction leadership positions reflect how formal inclusion does not translate into substantive power. Nonetheless, women who occupy strategic roles demonstrate higher substantive engagement, reaffirming gender and representation theories (Kanthak & Woon, 2015; Mechkova et al., 2024) that emphasize the impact of institutional opportunity on women's political performance.

These findings underscore that gender quotas alone are insufficient without institutional reforms ensuring equal access to influential positions and decision-making arenas. Enhancing women's substantive representation requires capacity-based recruitment, equitable role distribution, and inclusive deliberative spaces. This research contributes to gender and representation theories by showing how structural biases and factional norms shape women's limited substantive agency in local legislative contexts, particularly in policy domains traditionally dominated by men such as spatial and urban planning.

While this study provides a comprehensive understanding based on secondary data, it has limitations in capturing the subjective motivations and lived experiences of legislators. Future research should therefore employ qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, to gain deeper contextual insights. Such methods can uncover structural and cultural barriers that constrain women's substantive influence within parliament. These efforts would further enrich theoretical understandings of how institutional design and political culture interact to shape gender representation.

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