

THE TRANSFORMATION OF WOMEN'S ROLES IN PARLIAMENT: BETWEEN EMANCIPATION AND UPHOLDING HUMAN RIGHTS (CASE STUDY IN BANYUWANGI REGENCY)

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Abstract

This study explores the transformation of women's roles in Indonesia's parliamentary institutions, focusing on the intersection between women's emancipation and human rights enforcement at the local level, with Banyuwangi Regency as a case study. The research analyzes how gender equality principles—enshrined in international conventions such as CEDAW and Indonesia's national legislation—are reflected in the political representation and policy contributions of female members of the Banyuwangi Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD). Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through document analysis, interviews with female legislators and human rights activists, and secondary data from the General Election Commission (KPU) and the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan). The findings indicate that while women's representation in Banyuwangi DPRD has increased following the national 30% gender quota policy, substantive advocacy for women's rights and gender equality remains constrained by patriarchal norms, limited political resources, and institutional barriers. The study concludes that gender transformation in local parliaments like Banyuwangi is ongoing, reflecting both progress and persistent inequality in realizing women's political emancipation and human rights protection.

Keywords: *gender equality; political representation; human rights; local parliament; Banyuwangi.*

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in Indonesian politics has undergone significant transformation from the pre-independence period to the reform era. Figures such as Raden Ajeng Kartini, Dewi Sartika, and Maria Walanda Maramis have become symbols of women's struggle for equal rights in education and socio-political participation (Suryakusuma, 2020). This struggle for emancipation later gained a strong legal basis through the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984, which obliges states to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and ensure equality in public life (UN Women, 2018). In the context of national politics, the implementation of the principle of gender equality is realized through an affirmative policy in the form of a 30% quota for women's representation in legislative candidate lists, as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections. This policy aims not only to increase women's numerical representation but also to strengthen substantive representation—namely, women's ability to advocate for policies that are responsive to women's interests and human rights issues (Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995).

However, although this quota policy has increased the number of women in parliament at both the national and regional levels, various studies show that substantive representation remains weak. Factors such as patriarchal culture, limited access to political resources, and the dominance of masculine political party structures remain major obstacles to women's active participation in public policymaking (Siregar, 2018; Nurjanah, 2022). Banyuwangi Regency is a key focus for this study because it exhibits relatively progressive local political dynamics, yet remains influenced by patriarchal social structures. According to data from the Banyuwangi Regency General Elections Commission (KPU), there were 10 female members out of 50 members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), representing approximately 20% of the total legislative seats. This figure is still below the national target of 30%, but represents an improvement over the previous period, which only reached 12% (KPU Banyuwangi, 2019).

Furthermore, the Banyuwangi Regency Government has implemented various policies related to women's empowerment and human rights protection. For example, Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2011 concerning the Protection of Women and Children from Violence and Regent Regulation No. 26 of 2015 concerning Gender Mainstreaming. However, the implementation of these policies still faces various obstacles, particularly in terms of implementation at the legislative level. The results of an interview with one of the female members of the Banyuwangi DPRD from the NasDem faction, who stated that:

"Women in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) are often placed on commissions considered 'soft', such as education or health. Yet, we also want to contribute in the budget and legal fields. The challenge isn't just about numbers, but also about position and influence in the legislative process." (Interview, July 2024).

This shows that the role of women in local parliaments is still limited to symbolic spaces, not to substantive spaces where strategic decisions are made. The urgency of this research is based on the gap between affirmative action policies and the reality of women's political representation at the regional level. Despite a progressive legal framework, substantive transformation remains slow. Banyuwangi serves as an example of how women's political emancipation confronts local power structures, patriarchal culture, and electoral political mechanisms that are not yet fully inclusive.

The problems that will be studied in this research include:

1. How is the transformation of women's roles in the Banyuwangi DPRD in the context of political emancipation and human rights enforcement?
2. What are the structural and cultural barriers that limit women's substantive participation in local parliaments?
3. What is the strategy of women in the Banyuwangi DPRD in fighting for issues of women's rights and gender equality?

Theoretically, this research contributes to broadening the study of gender and local politics, particularly regarding the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation within a human rights framework. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as evaluation material for policymakers seeking to strengthen the role of women in regional legislative institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1) Emancipation Theory and Feminism

The concept of women's emancipation is fundamentally rooted in the feminist movement, which demands equal rights for men and women in all aspects of life. Liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of equal opportunities in the public sphere, including education, employment, and politics (Tong, 2009). This perspective is relevant to Indonesian women's political struggles since the early 20th century, which have focused on access to education and public participation (Suryakusuma, 2020).

Meanwhile, socialist and radical feminist theories view gender inequality as not simply a matter of access, but rather the result of patriarchal structures and power relations entrenched in social, economic, and political systems (Walby, 1990). In the parliamentary context, patriarchy is often manifested through male dominance in political parties, strategic positioning, and decision-making processes (Bourdieu, 2001). The post-structural feminist approach (Butler, 1990) highlights how women's identities are shaped and negotiated within discourses of power. This is crucial for understanding how women in local parliaments like Banyuwangi confront not only formal discrimination but also certain social expectations about the "ideal role of women."

2) Political Representation and Gender

Pitkin (1967) distinguished four dimensions of political representation: formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. Descriptive representation refers to the numerical representation of women in political institutions, while substantive representation refers to the ability of female representatives to advocate for women's interests and rights through public policy. In the Indonesian context, the 30% quota policy for women on legislative candidate lists was intended to strengthen descriptive representation, with the hope that it would also translate into substantive representation (Siregar, 2018). However, various studies have shown that increasing the number of women has not always been directly proportional to strengthening the gender equality agenda (Mulia, 2019). Furthermore, the critical mass theory (Kanter, 1977) states that women can only have a significant influence in the decision-making process when their proportion reaches a certain threshold (around 30–35%). In the case of Banyuwangi, which only has 20% female DPRD members, this condition indicates that substantive representation may still face structural barriers.

3) Women, Politics, and Human Rights Enforcement

From a human rights perspective, women's political participation is one of the civil and political rights guaranteed by international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and CEDAW (UN Human Rights Council, 2020). Upholding human rights in the local political context means ensuring that women have equal access, opportunity, and capacity to participate in the political process without discrimination. However, the reality in many regions in Indonesia shows that discrimination against women persists, both directly and structurally. The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) (2023) noted that most regions lack effective mechanisms to integrate gender perspectives into public policy, including in regional legislative functions. Several studies have found that women in regional DPRD are often placed in areas considered "feminine," such as social affairs, education, or health, and are rarely given strategic roles in budgeting, law, or macro-politics (Pratiwi, 2021). This situation indicates that the transformation of women's roles has not yet addressed the aspect of genuine human rights enforcement, as representation remains symbolic, not substantive.

4) Previous Studies and Research Gaps

Several previous studies have highlighted women's representation in regional parliaments. Siregar (2018) found that women's quota policies were ineffective because political parties had not implemented merit-based and equality-based recruitment. Pratiwi (2021) showed that in regions like Yogyakarta and Bali, women were more active in social issues than budgetary politics. However, there is little research specifically examining the relationship between the transformation of women's roles in local parliaments and the enforcement of human rights, particularly in Banyuwangi Regency. Therefore, this study fills this gap in the literature by combining gender and human rights approaches within a specific local political context.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand the phenomenon of the transformation of women's roles in local parliaments. This approach was chosen because it can holistically depict social and political realities and uncover the meaning behind actions and policies (Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted in Banyuwangi Regency as a case study location because this area has an increasing level of women's political participation, but still faces substantive obstacles in human rights representation and advocacy.

The research data consists of:

1. Primary data
 - a) Semi-structured interviews with 5 female members of the Banyuwangi DPRD, 2 local human rights activists from the Banyuwangi Women and Children Advocacy Center (PAPA), and 1 official from the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service (DP3A).
 - b) Participatory observation of the work meeting activities and commission sessions of the Banyuwangi DPRD.
2. Secondary data
 - a) Official documents: election data from the Banyuwangi KPU (2019–2024), the National Commission on Violence Against Women report (2023), as well as Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2011 and Regent Regulation No. 26 of 2015.
 - b) Academic literature and reports from international institutions (UNDP, UN Women, Bappenas).

Data analysis was carried out in three stages (Miles & Huberman, 1994):

1. Data reduction, by selecting and grouping the results of interviews and documents based on the theme of women's representation and human rights.
2. Data presentation, in the form of a comparative matrix between policies, participation and obstacles for women in the DPRD.
3. Conclusion drawing and verification, to find patterns of transformation and the relationship between political emancipation and the enforcement of human rights at the local level.

This approach is combined with thematic analysis to identify key themes such as “symbolic representation,” “patriarchal domination,” “gender advocacy,” and “strengthening women’s rights.”

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and member checking techniques for key informants. All informants provided written informed consent prior to the interviews, in accordance with ethical principles of social research. The informants' identities were kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms (e.g., Ayu, Dewi, Rina).

As expressed by one of the PAPA Banyuwangi activists:

"Many women in parliament are passionate about fighting for women's rights, but the party system and local political culture don't yet provide the space for them to speak freely." (Interview, August 2024).

This statement is an important reflection in understanding the research context: the transformation of women's roles is not only a matter of numbers, but also a matter of the power structure and political culture that surrounds it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-Political Conditions of Banyuwangi and Women's Representation in the DPRD

Banyuwangi Regency is one of the regions in East Java Province that has experienced quite dynamic political development since the reform era. With a population of around 1.6 million, Banyuwangi has a pluralistic and religious social character, dominated by the Javanese-Osing community, which still strongly maintains traditional and paternalistic values (Haryono, 2021). In a political context, Banyuwangi is known for its high voter turnout—around 82% in the 2019 election (Banyuwangi General Elections Commission, 2019). However, women's representation in the legislature has yet to reach the 30% quota mandated by Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections.

The following table shows data on women's representation in the Banyuwangi Regency DPRD:

Period	Number of DPRD Members	Number of Women	Percentage (%)
2014–2019	50	6	12%
2019–2024	50	10	20%

Source: Banyuwangi Election Commission, 2019

This 8% increase in the number of women represents significant numerical progress. However, based on interviews and observations by researchers, this increase has not been fully commensurate with an increase in women's substantive role in public policymaking.

As stated by a female DPRD member from the Gerindra Party:

"Our representation has increased, but in strategic meetings, such as those discussing the regional budget (APBD) or major regional regulations, women's voices are often not prioritized. There's still a perception that women are 'less sharp' when it comes to fiscal policy." (Interview, August 2024).

This condition shows that even though the quantity of representation has increased, the dominance of patriarchal culture is still strong in the political process in the Banyuwangi DPRD.

4.2 The Role of Female Legislators in Advocating Human Rights and Gender Issues

4.2.1 Participation in the Legislative Process

The research results show that female members of the Banyuwangi DPRD play an active role in discussing several public policies related to women's and children's rights, including:

1. Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2011 on the Protection of Women and Children from Acts of Violence.
2. Regent Regulation Number 26 of 2015 on Gender Mainstreaming.
3. Banyuwangi Rebound Program 2023, which includes women's economic empowerment post-COVID-19 pandemic.

However, most women's involvement is more advocacy-based than policy leadership. They play a role in championing social issues, but have not yet dominated macro-policy spheres such as economics and law.

One of the DPRD members from the PDI-P faction stated:

"We're often the ones pushing for regional regulations on women's protection, but when it comes to the budget stage, our position is weak because the strategic committees are dominated by men." (Interview, July 2024).

This phenomenon illustrates the gap between descriptive representation (number of women) and substantive representation (influence on policy).

4.2.2 Advocacy Through External Networks

Beyond the formal framework of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), several female legislators actively collaborate with local civil society organizations (CSOs), such as the Women and Children's Advocacy Center (PAPA), Fatayat NU Banyuwangi, and LBH Srikandi. This collaboration aims to strengthen social oversight of regional policies that impact women.

PAPA Banyuwangi activists stated:

"There are female council members with whom we often discuss violence cases or new regional regulations. But the system still relies heavily on personal relationships, not institutional mechanisms." (Interview, August 2024).

This shows that gender advocacy at the local level is still sporadic and has not been systematically integrated into the DPRD's working mechanisms.

4.3 Structural and Cultural Barriers

4.3.1 Patriarchy and Masculine Political Culture

The main obstacle facing women in the Banyuwangi Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) is the strong patriarchal culture in socio-political life. Men are still considered more worthy of holding strategic positions, while women are seen as having limited rationality and resilience in practical politics (Suryakusuma, 2020).

One legislator said:

"Within the party, we still have to compete not only with male candidates, but also with public perception, which is not yet accustomed to seeing women as political leaders." (Interview, August 2024).

Another factor is the lack of financial support and political resources. High campaign costs and minimal logistical support from parties make it difficult for women to win political contests unless they have strong social networks.

4.3.2 Institutional Position and Structure

Institutionally, women are often placed in commissions considered "women-friendly," such as Commission D (People's Welfare) or Commission C (Education and Health). Meanwhile, commissions with strategic roles in formulating budget and legal policies are still dominated by men.

The following table shows the distribution of Banyuwangi DPRD members based on commission and gender:

Commission	Total Members	Woman	Percentage (%)
Commission A (Law & Governance)	11	2	18%
Commission B (Economics & Finance)	10	1	10%
Commission C (Education & Health)	12	4	33%
Commission D (Social & Welfare)	10	3	30%

Source: Banyuwangi DPRD Secretariat, 2024

This distribution indicates that women's representation tends to be concentrated in the social sector. Consequently, women's voices on structural issues such as the economy, investment, and budgeting are relatively weak.

4.3.3 Lack of Political Capacity and Party Support

Several informants also revealed that political training and capacity building for women remains very limited. Political parties at the regional level rarely provide leadership and legislative training programs for female cadres.

"The party is only active leading up to elections. After being elected, we rarely receive training on budget analysis or drafting regional regulations." (Interview, Female Legislator, PKB Faction, August 2024).

In fact, in the context of gender mainstreaming, capacity building is an important prerequisite for women to participate substantively in politics (UNDP, 2020).

4.4 Transformation of Women's Roles: From Symbolic to Substantive

Despite facing numerous obstacles, this research also found a positive transformation process. Women in the Banyuwangi Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) have begun to build cross-party political solidarity through the Banyuwangi Parliamentary Women's Caucus (KPPB), established in 2022. KPPB has a main agenda of encouraging the integration of gender perspectives in regional policies, particularly in the preparation of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) and the supervision of gender-responsive budgets (ARG).

One of the KPPB initiators said:

"We're starting to change the way we work. Previously, we only discussed women's issues during Kartini Day. Now, we're trying to incorporate gender analysis into regional planning and budget documents." (Interview, October 2024).

This initiative marks a shift from symbolic representation (the presence of women in parliament) to substantive representation (real influence on public policy). This transformation is in line with the concept of transformative representation (Childs & Krook, 2009), namely when women not only participate, but also change political structures and practices to be more gender-equitable.

4.5 Analysis of the Relationship between Emancipation and Human Rights Enforcement

The transformation of women's roles in the Banyuwangi Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) reflects the dialectic between political emancipation and the enforcement of human rights. Emancipation here is not simply about increasing participation, but also about the struggle to achieve substantive equality in rights and opportunities. From a human rights perspective, women's political representation is part of the right to participate in government (Article 25 of the ICCPR). However, when women are only present symbolically without access to real influence, their political rights are not fully realized (CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23, 1997).

Data analysis shows that:

- Quota policies have succeeded in increasing numerical inclusion, but have not guaranteed equal participation.
- Efforts by women in the DPRD to mainstream gender are still hampered by patriarchal culture and hierarchical party structures.
- Local initiatives such as KPPB have the potential to become models for strengthening women's roles based on human rights at the regional level.

Thus, the transformation of women's roles in local parliaments such as Banyuwangi can be seen as a gradual process towards gender justice, where women are not only the subjects of policy, but also agents of social change and upholders of human rights values.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the transformation of women's roles in the Banyuwangi Regency DPRD is a complex and multidimensional process, which involves interactions between affirmative policies, local political culture, and human rights dynamics. Despite an increase in women's numerical representation from 12% in the 2014–2019 period to 20% in the 2019–2024 period, this achievement remains below the national quota target of 30%. This quantitative increase has not been accompanied by a strengthening of substantive representation in the public policymaking process. Women in the Banyuwangi Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) still face structural barriers such as the dominance of patriarchal culture, limited access to strategic commissions, and minimal institutional support from political parties.

However, this research also found signs of positive transformation. Through the formation of the Banyuwangi Women's Parliamentary Caucus (KPPB), female legislators have begun to build cross-party solidarity and are working to integrate gender analysis into regional policies, particularly in the preparation of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) and the Gender Responsive Budget (ARG). This transformation can be interpreted as an effort to shift women's roles from symbolic representation to substantive and transformative representation. From a human rights perspective, these steps are part of realizing women's right to full and equal participation in governance, as guaranteed by CEDAW and the ICCPR. Thus, this study confirms that women's emancipation in regional parliaments is not only determined by quota policies, but also by the extent to which the political system is able to create a fair space for participation that is free from structural discrimination. Theoretically, this research strengthens the concept of gender-transformative politics, namely a political process that not only increases the number of women in power structures, but also changes political norms, values, and practices to be more responsive to equality and human rights.

Practically, this research provides several recommendations:

1. For political parties, it is necessary to reorient merit-based political recruitment and strengthen the capacity of female legislators through leadership training and public policy advocacy.
2. For local governments, it is necessary to strengthen the synergy between legislative and executive institutions in implementing gender mainstreaming at every stage of development planning.
3. For civil society and human rights institutions, it is necessary to expand advocacy cooperation with female parliamentarians so that gender and human rights issues do not just become ceremonial agendas, but are truly included in regional strategic policies.

Ultimately, the transformation of women's roles in local parliaments, such as in Banyuwangi, reflects the long journey toward an inclusive and gender-equitable democracy. This process is ongoing and requires collective support

from various social, political, and legal actors to ensure the principles of emancipation and human rights enforcement are truly realized in local political practice.

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