GIJLSS
Greenation International Journal of Law and Social Sciences
+62 81210467572 https://research.e-greenation.org/GIJLSS greenation.info@gmail.com
GREENATION RESEARCH

DOI: https://doi.org/10.38035/gijlss.v4i5.1335
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Received: 18 August 2026 | **Revised:** 27 August 2026 | **Accepted:** 27 September 2026

The Role of Women in Local Politics in Biak Numfor: Substantive Representation or Political Formality?

Karolina R.S. Wenggi[1*], Martenci Antomina Gedi[2], Dedy Pribadi Uang[3]
[1]Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri, Papua, Indonesia, karolina@ipdn.ac.id.
[2]Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri, Papua, Indonesia, tencigedi@ipdn.ac.id.
[3]Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri, Papua, Indonesia, dedy@ipdn.ac.id.

[*]Corresponding Author: karolina@ipdn.ac.id[1]

Abstract: The increase in women's representation in political institutions is not always accompanied by the development of substantive representation capable of influencing political decision-making processes and public policy. This study aims to analyze women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency and explain the transformation process from formal representation to more substantive political influence. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis involving 10 informants from the Regency People's Representative Council (DPRK), political parties, local governments, women's organizations, and related institutional actors. The results indicate that women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency is in a transitional stage toward emerging substantive representation. This process can be understood through the pathway from formal representation to political access, effective political participation, and policy advocacy and negotiation, which subsequently leads to the emergence of more substantive political influence. However, this process does not occur automatically or linearly, but is influenced by the interaction between political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context that can function as both supporting and limiting conditions. This research produces a conceptual model of the transformation of women's political representation based on empirical findings specific to the case of Biak Numfor Regency, rather than a universally validated causal model. The model demonstrates that formal representation or an increase in the number of women alone is insufficient to generate substantive political influence. These findings contribute to the study of women's political representation by explaining the contextual mechanisms linking women's formal presence to more meaningful political influence and provide implications for strengthening inclusive local democracy in Papua.

Keywords: women's political representation, substantive representation, local politics, local democracy, Biak Numfor.

INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in political institutions is an important indicator of the quality of democracy because it reflects the political system's capacity to build inclusive, equal, and responsive representation to gaps in societal interests. Various countries have implemented affirmative action policies to expand women's access to political office with the aim of strengthening democratic legitimacy and improving the quality of political representation (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018; Celis & Childs, 2020). However, increasing the number of women in political institutions is not always accompanied by increased influence in the decision-making process. Several studies show that women's representation is often formal due to institutional barriers, limited political resources, power relations, and patriarchal social and cultural norms that limit women's capacity to carry out legislative, oversight, and public policy-making functions (Pitkin, 1972; Cassidy, 2022; Hamilton et al., 2024; Siow, 2023; Puspadewi et al., 2025; Kenny et al., 2025). Therefore, studies on women's political representation are increasingly shifting from the issue of increasing the number of representatives to the question of how women's presence can produce more meaningful representation and public policies that are responsive to the interests of women and vulnerable groups (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018; Celis & Childs, 2020).

In Indonesia, a policy requiring a minimum quota of 30 percent for female legislative candidates has expanded women's opportunities to enter representative institutions (Munggaran, 2023). However, this increased access has not yet fully translated into substantive representation. The dominance of party elites, limited political resources, weak institutional support, dynastic political practices, and patriarchal culture remain barriers to women influencing decision-making processes (Tiran et al., 2023; Prihatini & Halimatusa, 2024; Guterres et al., 2025; Rambe et al., 2025; Lestari et al., 2025). This complexity is increasingly evident in local politics in Papua, which is shaped by the interaction between formal political institutions, kinship structures, customary values, and informal power relations (Manoby et al., 2023). Nevertheless, Papuan women demonstrate a growing capacity through involvement in education, economics, social affairs, and culture, which serve as crucial capital for expanding their political participation (Salehuddin et al., 2024; Salehudin & Edyanto, 2023; Yare, 2021). Biak Numfor Regency reflects this dynamic. Gender relations are still influenced by local cultural values, including the concept of Binsyouwi, which relates to women's status after marriage (Sari, 2024). At the same time, women's representation in the Biak Numfor Regency People's Representative Council (DPRK) has fluctuated, from seven female members in the 2014–2019 period to four members in the 2019–2024 period, before increasing again to around 16 percent after the 2024 elections (Marani & Aedah, 2023; BPS, 2025). This situation suggests that changes in the number of women in the legislature have not automatically resulted in improvements in the quality or substantive influence of political representation.

Although research on women's political representation continues to grow, most studies still address affirmative action policies, patriarchal culture, women's empowerment, or political participation separately (Cassidy, 2022; Tiran et al., 2023; Manoby et al., 2023; Kenny et al., 2025; Guterres et al., 2025; Rambe et al., 2025; Salehuddin et al., 2024). Consequently, there is limited research explaining how the transformation from formal to substantive representation occurs in the local political context, particularly in Papua. This gap is not only related to the limited number of studies on the outcomes of women's representation, but also to the limited explanation of the processes linking women's formal presence in political institutions to political access, effective participation, advocacy and negotiation of interests, and the emergence of more substantive political influence. Therefore, an approach is needed that addresses these processes while also considering institutional conditions, women's capacities and resources, and the local social context that can support or limit this transformation.

To address this gap, this article analyzes women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency by answering two main questions: (1) how does women's formal representation evolve into more substantive political participation and influence; and (2) what conditions enable or constrain this transformation process in the local political context of Biak Numfor? Different from previous studies that tend to examine representation factors separately, this study reconstructs the transformation process of women's representation based on empirical findings, starting from formal representation, political access, effective participation, advocacy and policy negotiation, to the emergence of substantive representation. This study then produces a conceptual model based on empirical findings and specific to the case of Biak Numfor, which is not intended to be a universally validated causal model. Thus, this study contributes to the study of women's political representation by showing that substantive political influence does not emerge automatically from an increase in the number of women, but develops through a process influenced by the interaction between political institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze women's representation in local politics in Biak Numfor Regency, Papua. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences, perceptions, strategies, and obstacles in obtaining and exercising political roles within the local social, cultural, and institutional context. Biak Numfor Regency was purposively selected because its political life is influenced by kinship relations, customary values, and patriarchal culture, while women's involvement in formal political institutions continues to grow. The analytical framework utilizes the concepts of formal and substantive representation (Dowding & Giuliani, 2025), with explanatory factors including political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local socio-cultural context (Kenny et al., 2025; Mandasari, 2023; Manoby et al., 2023).

Primary data were obtained through 10 semi-structured interviews with informants purposively selected based on their knowledge, experience, position, and direct involvement in women's representation issues. The informants consisted of two female legislators, one male legislator, one female activist, one DP3AKB official, two BKPSDM officials, one Kesbangpol official, and two DPRK Secretariat officials. Interviews were conducted on June 9–10, 2026, by three research team members, lasting approximately 15–30 minutes per informant, and were conducted in Indonesian. The interview guide covered formal and substantive representation, political barriers, women's strategies and agency, institutional support, and the socio-cultural context. Probing questions were used to elicit explanations and concrete examples from the informants' responses.

Prior to the fieldwork, the research proposal underwent an academic review process by external reviewers through the faculty and was revised based on the feedback provided. Following this process, the research obtained a research letter issued by the Dean and a research permit from the Biak Numfor Regency Government through the Head of National Unity and Politics (Kesbangpol). Prior to the interviews, the researchers explained the purpose and scope of the research to potential informants. The informants expressed their willingness to participate upon initial contact and agreed to continue the interviews after receiving an explanation of the research. Participation was voluntary. However, during data collection, the researchers did not obtain explicit consent to publish names, titles, or quotes that could be directly linked to the informants' identities. Therefore, to protect confidentiality and mitigate potential political and reputational risks, the revised version of the manuscript omits the informants' names and removes personal identifying details not necessary for the analysis.

Interviews were not audio-recorded because data were collected through direct note-taking of information provided by informants during the interviews. These notes were then

consolidated by the research team for analysis and stored in a Microsoft Word document. Because audio recordings were not used, this study did not produce verbatim transcripts. Informant statements in the article are presented only as quotations if adequately captured in the interview notes, while other information is presented through analytical paraphrasing. Interview data and information that could identify informants are treated as limited research data and are not used for purposes beyond the research. In the revised manuscript, personally identifiable information has been removed or generalized according to the needs of the analysis. The involvement of three researchers in the interview and analysis process also helped enrich understanding of the data context and reduce the analysis' dependence on a single researcher's perspective.

Secondary data was obtained through documentation, including official data on the composition of Biak Numfor DPRK members for the 2024–2029 period, women's representation through election and appointment mechanisms, DPRK institutional documents, government programs related to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, and other relevant regulations and documents. Documentation was used to supplement and verify the information obtained through the interviews. Field observations were not conducted due to time constraints; therefore, this study does not claim to possess observational data.

Data analysis was conducted thematically through several stages: consolidation of interview notes, initial coding, grouping codes into categories, theme development, comparison between informants, and interpretation based on the theoretical framework. Initial codes included the 30 percent quota, party recruitment and cadre formation, candidate ballot numbers, patriarchal culture, political costs, family support, social capital, political education, competence, double burden, glass ceiling, merit system, and women's influence in decision-making. These codes were then grouped into five main themes: formal representation, substantive representation, institutional and political factors, women's agency and resources, and socio-cultural context. The mapping process was conducted by the principal researcher by reviewing interview notes and comparing them with documentary data.

Discrepant or conflicting information was not removed from the analysis but used to understand the gap between formal and substantive representation. For example, local government information regarding the fulfillment of the 30 percent quota was compared with the informant's view that fulfilling the quota did not automatically result in women's political influence. Similarly, women's formal equality of opportunity in the bureaucracy was compared with their experiences regarding gender bias, domestic burdens, and informal networks. These differences were analyzed as varying perspectives and part of the findings, not as data to be standardized.

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source triangulation, comparing statements from informants from legislative groups, local governments, the bureaucracy, civil society, and the DPRK Secretariat and matching them with documented data. Member checking was conducted by reconfirming specific information and interpretations with informants to ensure consistency between the researcher's notes and the intent conveyed during the interviews. This confirmation was used to clarify any remaining ambiguities and ensure that the researcher's interpretations did not deviate from the informant's explanations. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted through discussions of the data mapping results, codes, categories, and themes with two other members of the research team. This process helped test the consistency of interpretations and identify areas of the analysis that required clarification or review. Thus, the analysis process does not only depend on the interpretation of one researcher, but is carried out through cross-checking between interview data, documentation, confirmation with informants, and discussions between members of the research team.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents research findings on women's representation in local politics in Biak Numfor Regency, based on data from in-depth interviews and document analysis. The analysis focuses on determining whether women's involvement in local politics has evolved into substantive representation or remains limited to mere political formality. Furthermore, the study analyzes factors influencing the quality of women's representation through the interaction between political institutional dynamics, local socio-cultural structures, and women's political agency.

Women's Political Representation in Biak Numfor Regency: Substantive Representation or Political Formality?

This subsection analyzes the quality of women's political representation in local politics in Biak Numfor Regency using the political representation framework proposed by Dowding and Giuliani (2025) as a conceptual basis for distinguishing between formal and substantive representation. Formal representation emphasizes women's presence in political institutions through their presence and access to representative positions, while substantive representation emphasizes women's capacity to articulate interests, respond to community needs, and advocate for the interests of women and vulnerable groups through political processes and public policy. Based on this framework, the subsequent analysis not only assesses women's presence in political institutions but also explores how formal representation develops into political access, effective participation, and policy advocacy and negotiation that can lead to the emergence of substantive representation, taking into account institutional conditions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context that can support or limit these processes.

Formal Representation: Shared Characteristics

The concept of shared characteristics emphasizes that shared identity and social experiences between political representatives and the groups they represent are an important basis for political representation (Dowding & Giuliani, 2025). The study found that the presence of eight women in the Biak Numfor Regency People's Representative Council (DPRK) for the 2024–2029 period, consisting of five members elected through general elections and three members appointed through the Papua Special Autonomy mechanism, demonstrates women's increasing access to formal political institutions. One female member of the Biak Numfor DPRK emphasized that women's presence is not solely understood as fulfilling affirmative action requirements, but also as a means of bringing women's experiences and interests into the decision-making process. This view was reinforced by a representative of a women's civil society organization in Biak Numfor who emphasized the importance of women's roles in promoting more inclusive and gender-responsive policies. However, the study also showed that patriarchal culture, weak political cadre formation by political parties, and limited political support remain factors that limit the effectiveness of women's representation. These findings suggest that while the same characteristics have strengthened formal representation, these conditions have not yet fully developed into substantive representation as conceptualized by Celis and Lovenduski (2018) and Celis and Childs (2020).

Formal Representation: Proportionality of Representation (Proportional Representation)

Proportional representation emphasizes the importance of social group representation in political institutions as a foundation for inclusive representation (Dowding & Giuliani, 2025). In the context of Biak Numfor, women's representation needs to be understood by considering the institutional specifics of the Regency People's Representative Council (DPRK) within the

framework of Papua's Special Autonomy. Based on Law Number 2 of 2021 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua Province, the DPRK consists of members elected through general elections and members appointed from the Indigenous Papuan (OAP) element. The explanation of Article 6A paragraph (2) links the composition of appointed members with at least 30% female representation. This provision is outlined in Government Regulation Number 106 of 2021 concerning the Authority and Institutions for the Implementation of the Special Autonomy Policy for Papua Province, which stipulates that the filling of DPRK members through an appointment mechanism is carried out through the stages of announcement and proposal of candidates, verification and validation, selection, and determination. Article 76 of PP No. Law No. 106 of 2021 also stipulates that the submission of candidate proposals must consider at least 30% female representation. This mechanism demonstrates that the DPRK members appointed are through a special representation pathway for Indigenous Peoples (OPP), distinct from the electoral pathway. The process is carried out through a Selection Committee, taking into account the distribution of ethnicities and sub-ethnicities in the region of appointment. The Biak Numfor DPRK for the 2024–2029 period comprises 31 members, consisting of 25 elected members and 6 appointed through the Special Autonomy appointment mechanism. Thus, the number 31 represents the overall composition of the DPRK through these two membership pathways.

Of the 31 members, eight are women, consisting of five women out of the 25 elected members and three women out of the six appointed through the Special Autonomy mechanism. Thus, the overall representation of women reached 25.8%. This figure should not be interpreted as a measure of failure to meet the 30% affirmative target, because in the national electoral pathway, the requirement for at least 30% female representation relates primarily to the composition of the candidate list, not a guarantee that 30% of the seats elected must be filled by women. Rather, the separation of the two pathways reveals a substantive difference: women make up only 20% of elected members, but 50% of those appointed through the Special Autonomy mechanism. Interview findings indicate that affirmative action policies have expanded women's access to the political arena, but have not completely eliminated barriers to the nomination process and political competition. Research data also shows that women have begun to occupy strategic positions within the DPRK, including leadership positions and the position of Deputy Speaker of the DPRK through the Special Autonomy mechanism. However, women's involvement remains largely concentrated in education, health, social issues, and women's empowerment, indicating that increasing numerical representation has not completely eliminated the glass ceiling in women's political leadership (Cassidy, 2022). Thus, while formal representation of women in the Biak Numfor DPRK demonstrates positive developments, the differences between electoral pathways and appointment mechanisms indicate that numerical representation does not automatically translate into substantive representation; women's political influence remains shaped by institutional structures, competitive processes, and local political contexts (Pitkin, 1972; Celis & Lovenduski, 2018).

Substantive Representation: Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the ability of political representatives to recognize, respond to, and advocate for community needs through legislative, oversight, and policy advocacy functions (Dowding & Giuliani, 2025; Pitkin, 1972; Celis & Lovenduski, 2018; Celis & Childs, 2020). Research shows that female legislators in Biak Numfor carry out their responsibilities through institutional engagement, aspiration absorption, interaction with constituents, and advocacy for women's interests. A female member of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRK) explained that there is an agenda to provide space for Papuan women through political cadre formation as preparation for entering political parties and the regional

parliament. Furthermore, an official from the DPRK Secretariat explained that DPRK members conduct hearing dialogues to interact with communities in the *Bar* region or customary village association. At the local government level, an official in charge of gender mainstreaming explained the existence of programs for gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment, improving family quality, and promoting women's increased participation in the political, legal, social, and economic spheres. These findings indicate that institutional channels and programs exist that address women's needs, although research data does not indicate that these programs are directly the result of advocacy by female legislators.

A civil society perspective reinforces these findings while also highlighting the limitations of substantive representation. A representative of a women's civil society organization stated that women's involvement in politics should not stop at the 30 percent quota, but should enable women to participate in decision-making and produce more inclusive and gender-responsive policies. Thus, research indicates that women have demonstrated responsiveness through institutional participation, constituent interactions, and advocacy, but evidence of direct influence on policy decisions and outcomes remains limited. Interview data did not reveal traceable outputs such as regulatory changes, budget changes, adopted oversight recommendations, or policy outcomes that can be directly attributed to the interventions of female legislators. These findings emphasize the importance of distinguishing participation in institutional activities from substantive influence on policy, in line with Kenny et al. (2025) who emphasized that substantive representation is influenced by institutional capacity and the distribution of political power.

Substantive Representation: Interest Orientation

Interest orientation emphasizes the ability of political representatives to translate public aspirations into policies and political decisions that favor the groups they represent (Dowding & Giuliani, 2025). Research findings indicate that women in the Biak Numfor Regency Regional House of Representatives (DPRK) have played a role in legislative, oversight, and budgetary functions through their participation in commissions, special committees, and the budget committee, as well as by voicing their views in legislative forums. Marian Magdalena Mirino explains that although women possess equal formal authority, their influence on strategic decisions remains limited because the structures of political parties and legislative institutions are still male-dominated. Conversely, Sherly Wabisir explains that the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) and women's empowerment programs has strengthened the political capacity of Indigenous Papuan women to advocate for their interests. These findings reinforce the arguments of Kenny et al. (2025), Pitkin (1972), and Celis and Lovenduski (2018) that substantive representation is determined not solely by the presence of women in political institutions, but also by the ability to influence public agendas and decisions. Therefore, women in Biak Numfor have begun to exercise substantive representation, even though their influence on strategic policies still faces structural obstacles.

Substantive Representation or Political Formality? A Synthesis of Findings

Research findings indicate that women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency is in a transitional phase from formal representation to emerging substantive representation. Increasing women's representation through affirmative policies and appointment mechanisms within the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRK) through a special mechanism for Papua has expanded women's political access. This is reflected, among other things, in the presence of eight women out of 31 DPRK members in the 2024–2029 period (25.8%), including women who hold the positions of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. However, this increased formal presence has not automatically resulted in equal influence in strategic decision-making. Male dominance in party structures and

political institutions still limits women's capacity to influence political agendas and decisions. On the other hand, women have demonstrated elements of substantive representation through the articulation of community aspirations, implementation of oversight functions regarding government policies, advocacy for women's and children's issues, and strengthening women's political cadres. These findings reinforce the views of Dowding and Giuliani (2025), Pitkin (1972), Celis and Lovenduski (2018), and Celis and Childs (2020) that the quality of political representation cannot be measured solely by the number of representatives, but also by the ability of political actors to articulate interests and influence public agendas and policies. Thus, women's representation in Biak Numfor has moved beyond mere political formality, but has not yet fully achieved substantive representation. This transformation process occurs through expanded political access, more effective participation, and advocacy and negotiation of interests. Political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context act as conditions that can enable or constrain this process.

Local Political Structures and Institutions in Shaping Women's Political Representation

This subsection analyzes how local political structures and institutions influence the quality of women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency using the gendered institutions perspective proposed by Kenny et al. (2025). In this perspective, women's representation is determined not only by their presence in political institutions, but also by the distribution of power, political recruitment mechanisms, institutional support, and social and cultural norms that shape women's opportunities to participate and influence decision-making processes. Based on the research findings, local political structures and institutions do not function solely as obstacles or supporters, but rather act as conditions that can open political access and opportunities while simultaneously limiting the development of women's political influence.

Patriarchal Dominance in Local Politics

Patriarchal dominance remains a significant obstacle to women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency, as the structure of political parties and political institutions tends to reproduce power relations that favor men (Kenny et al., 2025). Research findings indicate that although political parties have met the 30 percent affirmative action quota, the selection of candidate numbers and strategic positions is still dominated by men. Consequently, women's involvement in the political process, in some circumstances, serves more to fulfill administrative requirements than to provide equal access to support and strategic political positions. Informants from women's organizations in Papua also emphasized that Papuan women are still often positioned as complementary, rather than as primary actors in political leadership. These findings indicate that affirmative action policies have not fully changed the distribution of power within political parties, as proposed by Celis and Childs (2020). Thus, patriarchal dominance is a limiting factor in the transformation process from formal representation to more substantive political influence.

Cultural and Traditional Norms in Local Politics

Cultural norms and traditions influence the quality of women's political representation by shaping leadership legitimacy in local communities (Manoby et al., 2023). Research findings indicate that kinship systems and social networks still play a role in determining women's political opportunities, although their influence is not always restrictive. Informants from women's organizations in Papua explained that the Biak community is increasingly accepting women as leaders as long as they possess sufficient capacity, integrity, and organizational experience. This change is reflected in the increasing number of women occupying strategic positions, including as leaders of the Regional People's Representative

Council (DPRK) and officials in regional apparatuses. However, women still face stereotypes that place politics as a male domain and the double burden of demanding domestic roles. These findings align with Roy and Sachdeva (2025) and Singh (2024), who suggest that traditional gender norms continue to limit women's political space through informal social mechanisms. Thus, culture and traditions in Biak Numfor Regency do not merely reproduce patriarchal dominance but, under certain conditions, can also serve as social capital that strengthens the legitimacy of women's leadership.

Political Recruitment of Women by Political Parties

Political parties act as political gatekeepers, determining women's access to political office through recruitment and nomination processes (Kenny et al., 2025). Research findings indicate that although political parties in Biak Numfor Regency have met the 30 percent affirmative action quota, its implementation still tends to be oriented towards fulfilling administrative requirements. Informants from the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRK) who obtained positions through special mechanisms for Papua explained that strategic positions and candidate placement in competitive ticket numbers are still dominated by men. In this situation, some female candidates rely on family networks or relationships with political figures to gain support. These findings align with Celis and Childs (2020), Prihatini and Halimatusa (2024), and Lestari et al. (2026), who show that affirmative action policies are not always accompanied by strengthening cadre development and a more equal distribution of political opportunities. Thus, party recruitment mechanisms are one of the institutional conditions that determine whether women's formal access can develop into more effective political participation.

Political Institutional Support for Women's Representation

Political institutional support determines the extent to which women's presence in political institutions can develop into more substantive political influence (Kenny et al., 2025). Research findings indicate that women are beginning to occupy strategic positions in the DPRK (Regional People's Representative Council) and play roles in various council apparatuses. However, women's influence in decision-making remains limited by the dominance of male-centered political networks. On the other hand, local governments, through their relevant institutions, continue to implement political education and capacity building programs to strengthen the participation of indigenous Papuan women. These findings reinforce the views of Celis and Lovenduski (2018) and Kenny et al. (2025) that substantive representation requires institutional support, political capacity, and more equal access to political resources. Thus, institutional support can be a supportive condition that enables women to develop their capacity from mere formal presence to more effective political participation and influence.

Political Structures and Institutions as Opportunities or Obstacles for Women's Substantive Representation

Research findings indicate that political structures and institutions in Biak Numfor Regency play a dual role in the transformation of women's representation: they act as both opportunities and obstacles. Affirmative action policies, Papua-specific appointment mechanisms, and the increasing presence of women in political positions have expanded women's political access. However, patriarchal dominance, less-than-inclusive party recruitment mechanisms, and unequal access to political networks and resources continue to limit women's ability to influence strategic decision-making. The findings also indicate that although women have equal formal authority within political institutions, their ability to influence strategic agendas and policies remains influenced by male-dominated power configurations. This suggests that formal presence is a necessary but insufficient prerequisite

for generating substantive influence. Thus, political structures and institutions serve as conditions that influence the transformational journey from political access to effective participation, advocacy, and policy negotiation, while also determining the extent to which this process can progress toward substantive representation (Celis & Childs, 2020; Kenny et al., 2025).

Women's Agency and Resources in Shaping Political Representation

This subsection analyzes how women's agency and resources influence their ability to enter the political arena, exercise their representative function, and develop political influence in Biak Numfor Regency. Referring to Mandasari (2023), women's agency is understood as the ability to utilize capacity, motivation, self-confidence, networks, and various available resources to expand the space for political participation and representation. In the context of this research, women's agency and resources are understood as conditions that can both enable and constrain the process of transformation from formal representation to more substantive political influence.

Women's Political Capacity

Political capacity is a crucial resource for women in carrying out their representational function (Mandasari, 2023). Research findings indicate that women's political capacity in Biak Numfor Regency develops through education, organizational experience, and involvement in community social life. Informants from the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRK) emphasized the need for women to possess the competence and experience to advocate for community interests, while informants from Papuan women's organizations explained that organizational experience strengthens women's abilities to advocate and carry out their representational functions. Furthermore, cadre development and political education supported by the DP3AKB (Regional Leadership Development Agency) have contributed to increasing women's political capacity, although these efforts have not yet reached all women who aspire to become political leaders. These findings reinforce the views of Celis and Lovenduski (2018) and Pitkin (1972) that the quality of representation depends not only on women's presence as descriptive representatives but also on their capacity to carry out political functions and advocate for the interests they represent.

Women's Political Motivation

Political motivation drives women to enter and maintain involvement in the political process (Mandasari, 2023). Research findings indicate that women in Biak Numfor Regency are motivated to advocate for the interests of women and children, increase Papuan women's political participation, and contribute to regional development. Experience in social, religious, and women's organizations contributes to shaping women's political awareness and readiness to carry out their representational functions. Support from family, community, and the DP3AKB gender mainstreaming program also strengthens this motivation, although patriarchal culture remains a challenge. These findings suggest that motivation is an agential resource that can encourage women to transform political access into more active involvement in the representation process.

Political Self-Confidence

Political self-confidence is a psychological asset that encourages women to participate in and influence political decision-making (Mandasari, 2023). Research findings indicate that women's self-confidence in Biak Numfor Regency develops through political experience, family and community support, and social networks. The courage to compete and make decisions is a crucial asset in a male-dominated political environment. Although male

dominance in party structures remains a challenge, the presence of women in political leadership positions provides examples and legitimacy that can strengthen other women's confidence in political engagement. These findings suggest that political experience and the presence of female political role models can serve as agentic resources that help women move beyond formal access to more effective political participation.

Economic Resources

Economic resources influence women's ability to enter and maintain political careers (Mandasari, 2023). Research findings indicate that the high cost of politics remains a major barrier for women in Biak Numfor Regency. Family support not only provides social legitimacy but can also provide financial support and political networks during the electoral process. Furthermore, religious organizations, traditional communities, women's organizations, and bureaucratic networks can serve as forms of social capital that help women overcome limited economic resources. These findings suggest that women's ability to survive and thrive in politics is determined not only by economic capital but also by a combination of family support, social networks, and political capacity. Thus, limited economic resources remain a limiting factor, while social support and networks can serve as resources that enable women to maintain political engagement.

Women's Agency as a Transformative Factor Toward Substantive Representation

Research findings indicate that the transformation of women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency is influenced not only by expanding access through affirmative action policies, but also by women's ability to utilize their political capacity, motivation, self-confidence, networks, and available resources (Mandasari, 2023). Women's involvement in organizations, political experience, family and community support, and capacity building provide resources that can help them carry out their representational functions and advocate for public interests. However, this agential capacity operates within a political environment that still faces structural limitations, particularly male dominance, high political costs, and unequal access to resources. Thus, women's agency and resources serve as enabling conditions for women to transform formal access into more effective participation and strengthen their capacity to advocate and negotiate interests, but their influence remains contingent on broader institutional and socio-political conditions. In this perspective, increasing capacity, cadre development, strengthening political networks, and expanding access to resources are important factors that can support the development of formal representation towards emerging substantive representation (Pitkin, 1972; Celis & Lovenduski, 2018).

Local Social Context in Shaping Women's Political Representation

This subsection analyzes the influence of the local social context on women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency using the perspective of Manoby et al. (2023). In this context, kinship structures, customary institutions, communal values, and social relations shape a political environment that can create both opportunities and obstacles for women in gaining legitimacy, building support, and carrying out their political representational functions. The research findings indicate that the local social context does not function solely as a constraining factor but has a dual influence, depending on how these social resources interact with women's capacities and local power structures.

Kinship Structure

Kinship structures are a source of political legitimacy and support for women in Biak Numfor Regency (Manoby et al., 2023). Research findings indicate that family, clan, and community relationships play a crucial role in women's recruitment and political success.

Family support can provide moral support, voter mobilization, and political legitimacy, strengthening women's opportunities in political competition. However, the dominance of family elites and patriarchal culture can also limit women's autonomy in decision-making. These findings suggest that kinship structures can function as both social capital and a limiting factor, ensuring that women's political capacity remains essential to ensure political legitimacy is not solely dependent on family relationships (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018; Kenny et al., 2025).

Women's Position in Customary Institutions

Customary structures continue to impact women's opportunities in local politics, as customary decision-making processes are generally dominated by male figures (Manoby et al., 2023). Research findings indicate that these conditions can limit women's influence in decision-making. However, increased education, organizational experience, and involvement in the bureaucracy have strengthened women's political legitimacy. This is reflected in the emergence of women holding strategic positions, including the Chairperson of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRK), Deputy Chairperson of the DPRK through a special mechanism for Papua, and a female acting regional head in Biak Numfor Regency. These findings demonstrate that customary institutions do not merely serve as obstacles but, under certain conditions, can serve as a source of political legitimacy when supported by individual capacity and community acceptance (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018).

Communal Values in Local Political Life

Communal values are a crucial form of social capital in building women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency (Manoby et al., 2023). Research findings indicate that women's involvement in social and religious activities, women's organizations, and community service can strengthen public trust in women. Organizational experience and closeness to the community help women understand community needs, while support from the church, the community, and women's networks can strengthen legitimacy and political support. However, community-based decision-making is still influenced by male figures with greater social authority. These findings suggest that communal values constitute social capital that can support women's representation, but their effectiveness remains influenced by power relations within the community (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018).

Local Social Relations

Local social relations are crucial for shaping women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency because they can strengthen trust, networks, and political support (Manoby et al., 2023). Research findings indicate that social organizations, women's organizations, and religious communities provide space for women to develop capacity and expand political networks. Organizational experience also enhances women's ability to understand the needs of the community and vulnerable groups. Church support and social networks also play a role in gaining political legitimacy. However, access to these networks is not fully equitable, so women with greater organizational experience and social networks tend to have greater political opportunities. Thus, local social relations can serve as a resource that enables women to expand access, increase participation, and strengthen representational capacity, although the benefits remain influenced by the distribution of access and power within society (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018).

Local Social Context as a Facilitating or Hindering Factor for Substantive Representation

Research findings indicate that the local social context in Biak Numfor Regency functions simultaneously as a supporting and limiting factor in the transformation of women's

political representation. Support from families, women's organizations, religious communities, and social networks can strengthen women's legitimacy, access, and political participation. Conversely, elite-controlled kinship structures, male-dominated customary practices, and patriarchal norms can limit women's autonomy and influence in strategic decision-making. These findings suggest that the local social context does not have a deterministic influence on women's representation. The same social resources can provide opportunities for women when they support legitimacy, capacity, and political networks, but can also become limitations when driven by unequal power relations. Thus, the local social context is one of the conditions that shapes the transformation process from political access to effective participation, policy advocacy, and negotiation, and ultimately can support or limit the emergence of substantive representation. These findings reinforce the views of Celis and Lovenduski (2018), Kenny et al. (2025), and Manoby et al. (2023) that the quality of women's political representation is formed through the interaction between individual capacity, political institutions, and local social context.

A Model of the Transformation of Women's Political Representation in Biak Numfor Regency

This subsection presents a synthesis of research findings on the transformation process of women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency. The findings indicate that substantive representation does not emerge solely from an increase in the number of women in political institutions, but develops through the interaction between political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context. These three aspects are not positioned as stages of transformation, but rather as conditions that can enable or limit the development of women's representation. Based on this synthesis of findings, this study formulates a model that explains how formal representation can develop through political access, effective participation, and advocacy and policy negotiation toward emerging substantive representation in the local political context of Biak Numfor Regency.

The Relationship between Formal Representation and Substantive Representation

Research findings indicate that formal representation provides a starting point for expanding women's political access, but does not automatically translate into substantive representation (Pitkin, 1972). Affirmative action policies and appointment mechanisms specifically designed for Papua have expanded women's presence and access to political institutions. However, women's ability to translate this access into political influence is influenced by political capacity, institutional support, power distribution, and social legitimacy. Thus, the relationship between formal and substantive representation is neither linear nor automatic. Formal representation provides an initial opportunity that needs to be translated into political participation and influence through supportive conditions, while patriarchal dominance, limited resources, and unequal political networks can limit this development (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018; Manoby et al., 2023).

The Role of Political Structures and Institutions in the Transformation of Representation

Political structures and institutions serve as institutional conditions that can both expand and limit the transformation process of women's representation. Research findings indicate that affirmative action policies, appointment mechanisms, and institutional support have opened women's access to political institutions and strategic positions. However, patriarchal dominance, less-than-inclusive party recruitment mechanisms, and unequal access to resources and political networks still limit women's ability to influence decision-making. Thus, the influence of political structures and institutions on women's representation is conditional: institutions can be enabling conditions when they provide equal access, support, and resources,

but constraining conditions when they maintain an unequal distribution of power (Celis & Lovenduski, 2018; Kenny et al., 2025).

The Role of Women's Agency and Resources in the Transformation of Representation

In addition to institutional conditions, the transformation of representation is also influenced by women's ability to utilize their capacity, organizational experience, motivation, self-confidence, and available social networks. Research findings indicate that the ability to build political legitimacy, understand community needs, develop networks, and advocate for public interests helps women transform political access into more effective engagement. Family support and social networks can also strengthen women's position in local politics. However, these capabilities operate within an environment with structural limitations, such as high political costs, male dominance, and unequal access to resources. Thus, women's agency serves as an enabling condition that can strengthen the transformation process, but its effectiveness depends on the institutional and socio-political environment in which it operates (Mandasari, 2023; Celis & Lovenduski, 2018).

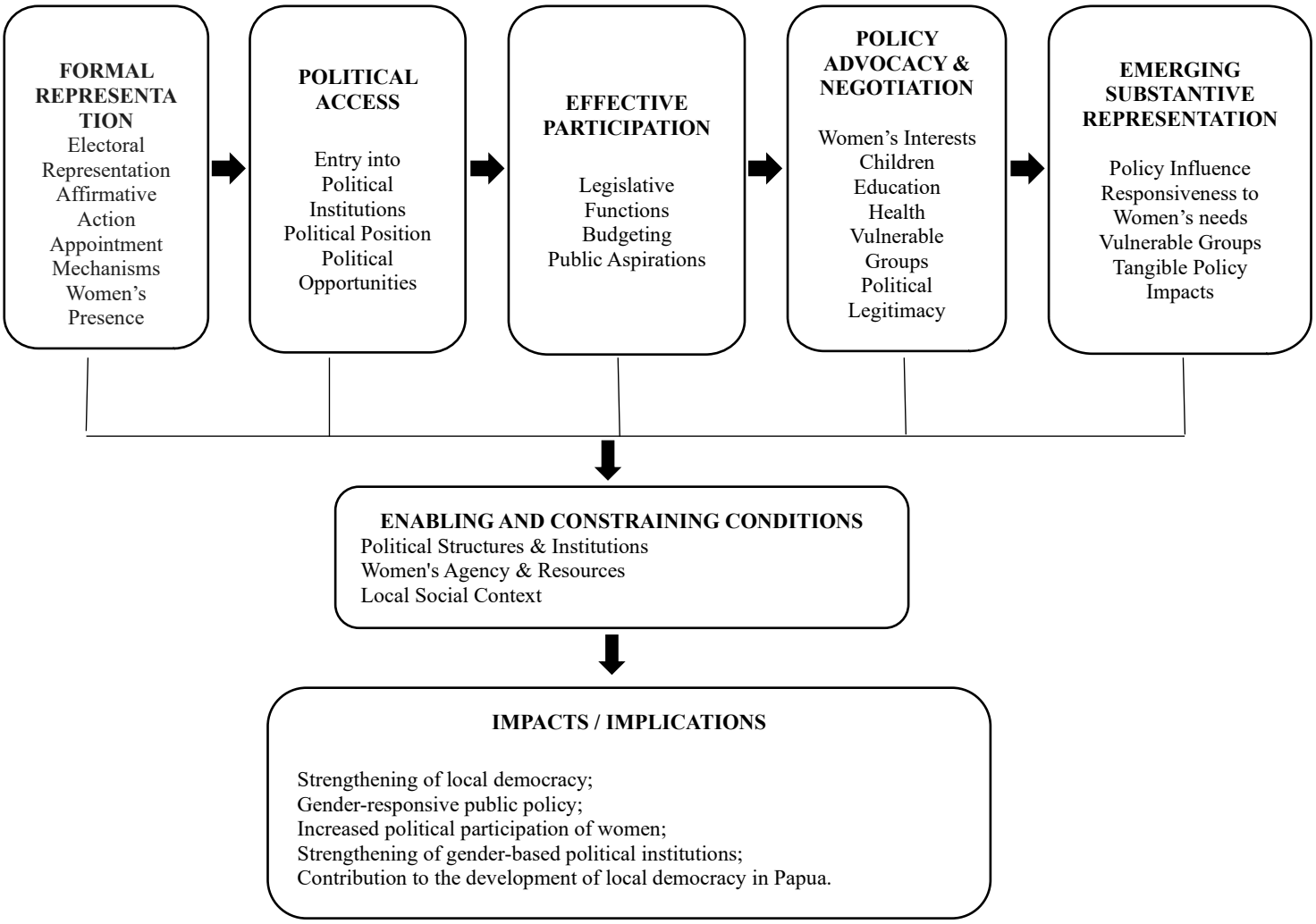
The Role of the Local Social Context in the Transformation of Representation

Research findings indicate that the local social context is a crucial condition shaping the opportunities and limitations for the transformation of women's representation in Biak Numfor Regency (Manoby et al., 2023). Kinship structures, customary practices, communal values, and social relations can limit women's political space through patriarchal norms and the dominance of male figures, but at the same time can provide legitimacy and social capital through support from family, religious communities, women's organizations, and community networks. Thus, the influence of the local social context is not deterministic. The same social resources can be enabling conditions when they strengthen women's legitimacy, support, and networks, but can also be constraining conditions when controlled by unequal power relations. These conditions influence the extent to which women can develop political access into effective participation, advocacy, and negotiation of interests, which ultimately can support the emergence of substantive representation.

A Conceptual Model of the Transformation of Women's Political Representation in Biak Numfor Regency

The findings in the previous section indicate that the transformation of women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency cannot be explained solely by the increase in the number of women holding formal political positions. This transformation occurs through a process where formal representation opens political access for women, which can then develop into effective political participation, advocacy, and policy negotiation, and lead to the emergence of substantive representation. This process is influenced by the interaction between political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context, which can function as both supporting and limiting factors. Based on the synthesis of these empirical findings, Figure 1 presents a conceptual model that illustrates the process of transformation of women's political representation from formal existence to more substantive political influence.

Figure 1. Model of the Transformation of Women's Representation in Politics in Biak Numfor Regency, Papua Province



The model demonstrates that formal representation is an important starting point, but does not automatically translate into substantive representation. Research findings indicate that women's political influence becomes more meaningful when formal access is accompanied by opportunities to participate effectively, the ability to articulate and champion interests, and the capacity to advocate and negotiate in decision-making processes. At the same time, this transformation process remains influenced by political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context, which can both strengthen and limit women's capacity to play their political roles. Therefore, this model views the transformation of women's political representation as a dynamic and context-dependent process, moving from formal existence to substantive representation, rather than as a linear consequence of increasing the number of women in political institutions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that women's political representation in Biak Numfor Regency is undergoing a transition from formal representation to emerging substantive representation. Affirmative policies and appointment mechanisms related to Special Autonomy have expanded women's political access, as reflected in the presence of eight women among the 31 members

of the Biak Numfor Regency Regional People's Representative Council (DPRK) for the 2024–2029 period. However, increased numerical representation has not automatically resulted in equal influence in strategic decision-making and public policy formulation. Elements of substantive representation are beginning to be seen through women's involvement in legislative and oversight functions, articulation of community aspirations, and advocacy for issues related to women, children, education, health, and vulnerable groups. At the same time, patriarchal political structures, unequal recruitment opportunities, limited access to political resources, and a male-dominated power structure continue to limit the development of women's political influence.

Further research findings indicate that this transformation does not occur linearly or automatically from increased numerical representation to substantive representation. Empirical findings indicate a process by which formal representation opens political access, which can then develop into more effective participation and then advocacy and policy negotiation, depending on the conditions surrounding women's political action. Political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context serve as conditions that can both enable and constrain this process. Political capacity, organizational experience, motivation, self-confidence, family support, and social networks can strengthen women's ability to carry out their representational functions. Conversely, patriarchal structures, unequal access to resources, and male-dominated political networks can limit this process. Similarly, kinship structures, customary practices, communal values, and local social relations can serve as sources of political legitimacy as well as limiting mechanisms.

The primary contribution of this research is the development of a contextual heuristic model of the transformation of women's political representation. The model demonstrates that substantive representation does not emerge simply through increasing the number of women in political institutions, but through a process linking political access, effective participation, and policy advocacy and negotiation, which are supported or constrained by political structures and institutions, women's agency and resources, and the local social context. This model is not intended as a universally validated causal model, but rather as a case-specific heuristic explanation derived from empirical findings in Biak Numfor Regency. As such, it provides an analytical basis for further research on the transformation of women's representation in the local political context of Papua and elsewhere.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single case, Biak Numfor Regency, with primary attention focused on women's political representation in the DPRK and the associated local political environment. Therefore, the findings are contextual and cannot be directly generalized to other regions or political institutions without the support of comparative evidence. Second, the study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design based on 10 semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence. Therefore, the findings primarily reflect the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of actors directly involved in or knowledgeable about women's political representation. Third, the study captures the transformation of representation within the current political context and does not yet provide longitudinal evidence regarding the development of women's political influence across several election periods. Fourth, the model developed in this study is a case-specific heuristic model derived from empirical evidence, not a statistically validated causal model. Therefore, the model's applicability and explanatory power in broader contexts still require testing through comparative and longitudinal research.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be put forward. First, political parties need to move beyond administrative compliance with affirmative action policies by strengthening women's political recruitment, cadre formation, leadership development, and access to competitive political positions. Second, regional political institutions need to strengthen institutional mechanisms that enable women to participate effectively in legislative, oversight, and policy-making processes, including through political education, capacity building, and more equal access to political resources. Third, strengthening women's political representation requires considering the importance of families, communities, religious organizations, women's organizations, and local social networks as sources of political legitimacy and support, while addressing social norms and power relations that can limit women's autonomy and influence.

For future research, the model developed in this study needs to be further examined and refined, rather than assumed to have universal validity. Comparative research in various regions of Papua and other regions in Indonesia can be used to test whether the process from political access to effective participation, advocacy, and policy negotiation occurs similarly under different institutional and socio-cultural conditions. Longitudinal or mixed methods research is also needed to obtain stronger evidence regarding changes in women's political influence over time and to examine whether the substantive representation that has begun to grow can be maintained across election periods.

Author Contributions

Karolina R.S. Wenggi contributed to the conceptualization of the study, development of the theoretical framework, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and drafting of the manuscript. Martenci Antomina Gedi contributed to the development of the research methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings, and critical revision of the manuscript. Dedy Pribadi Uang contributed to research supervision, conceptual development, validation of findings, academic review and editing, and finalization of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the drafting and revision of the article, critically reviewed the final version of the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication.

REFERENCES

Badan Pusat Statistik. (2025). Keterlibatan perempuan di parlemen (persen), 2024. https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/2/NDY0IzI=/keterlibatan-perempuan-diparlemen.html

Cassidy, L. (2022). Gender and power dynamics. In T. Madzivhandila, S. Hachigonta, J.Francis, J. Kamuzhanje, O. D. Kolawole, & S. DeWolf (Eds.), *Development practice inEastern and Southern Africa*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91131-7_11

Celis, K., & Lovenduski, J. (2018). Power struggles: gender equality in political representation. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, *1*(1-2), 149-166. https://doi.org/10.1332/251510818X15272520831085

Celis, K., & Childs, S. (2020). Feminist democratic representation. Oxford University Press.

Dogan, O. (2026). Case studies in comparative political research: Value, versatility, and methodological integration. *American Journal of Qualitative Research, 10*(1), 317–331.https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/17874

Dowding, K., & Giuliani, A. (2025). Political representation: A typology and synthesis.*Representation*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2025.2526209

Fadila, F., Safriani, S., Eliana, E., & Khaddafi, M. (2025). Pengumpulan data dalam penelitian kualitatif: Wawancara. *Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia, 2*(7), 13446–13449.

Guterres, M. M. R., & Dewi, A. A. S. L. (2025). Legal framework on women's participation in legislative elections in Indonesia. *Verdict: Journal of Law Science*, *4*(2),70–86. https://doi.org/10.59011/vjlaws.4.2.2025.70-86

Hamilton, L., Vieira, M. B., Disch, L., Thomassen, L., & Urbinati, N. (2024). The power of political representation. Contemporary Political Theory, 23(3), 456–484.https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-023-00665-x

Kenny, M., Erikson, J., & Josefsson, C. (2025). Gendered political institutions. In *Encyclopedia of gender and politics*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lestari, P., & Kurniawan, G. F. (2025). Intersectionality and political representation: Challenges and policy implications for marginalized women in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 16*(2), 1–38.

Lim, W. M. (2025). What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal, 33*(2), 199-229. https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264622

Mandasari, N. (2023). Peran politik perempuan dalam persfektif gender. *Ebisma (Economics, Business, Management, & Accounting Journal)*, *3*(2), 133-143. https://doi.org/10.61083/ebisma.v3i2.38

Manoby, W. M., Siscawati, M., & Dewi, K. H. (2023). Papua special autonomy in engagement with gender. *Jurnal Bina Praja*, *15*(2), 431–442. https://doi.org/10.21787/jbp.15.2023.431-442

Marani, E., & Aedah, N. (2023). Implementasi kebijakan keterwakilan perempuan pada pemilu legislatif. *Jurnal Kebijakan Publik, 5*, 127–136.https://doi.org/10.31957/jkp.v5i3.2793

Munggaran, T. P. (2023). Peran dan pengaruh perempuan dalam dinamika politik di Indonesia. *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi, 4*(7). https://doi.org/10.59141/jist.v4i7.653

Nurfajriani, W. V., Ilhami, M. W., Mahendra, A., Afgani, M. W., & Sirodj, R. A. (2024).Triangulasi data dalam analisis data kualitatif. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan, 10*(17), 826–833. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13929272

Pitkin, Hanna F (1972). *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520340503

Prihatini, E., & Halimatusa'diyah, I. (2024). Gender, political dynasties, and committee assignments. *Parliamentary Affairs, 77*(1), 196–214. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsac019

Puspadewi, I. D. A., Wastawa, I. W., & Siswadi, G. A. (2025). Perempuan dalam ruang komunikasi politik. *Vicara, 1*(4), 14–27.

Rambe, R. D., Dompak, T., & Salsabila, L. (2025). Keterwakilan perempuan dalam politik. *Jurnal Pemerintahan dan Politik, 10*(1), 170–191. https://doi.org/10.36982/jpp.v10i1.5192

Roy, J., & Sachdeva, L. (2025). Gender equality in local self-government. *Lex Localis, 23*(S1), 174–179.

Salehuddin, S., & Edyanto, E. (2023). Strategi pemberdayaan wanita nelayan asli Papua. *Jurnal Sosial Politik, 6*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.32699/resolusi.v6i1.3752

Salehuddin, S., Syukur, M., Suhaeb, F. W., & Utomo, J. (2024). Resistensi perempuan Biak dalam sistem patriarki. *Gema Kampus, 19*(1), 80–91.

Sari, N. H. (2024). Gender discourse of Biak women. *Dialogue: Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Publik, 6*(2), 798–809. https://doi.org/10.14710/dialogue.v6i2.22348

Safarudin, R., Zulfamanna, Z., Kustati, M., & Sepriyanti, N. (2023). Penelitian kualitatif. *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research, 3*(2), 9680–9694.

Singh, S. (2024). Women in politics: Barriers to participation. *International Journal of Social Science Research, 1*(2), 19–28.

Siow, O. (2023). What constitutes substantive representation? *Political Studies Review, 21*(3), 532–538. https://doi.org/10.1177/14789299231154864

ᴛiran, R., Tabun, D. S. N., Benyamin, R., & Keon, Y. F. (2023). Women in the political landscape. Journal of Government and Political Issues, 3(1), 25–33. https://doi.org/10.53341/jgpi.v3i1.86

Yare, M. (2021). Peran ganda perempuan pedagang dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan keluarga di Kelurahan Karang Mulia Distrik Samofa Kabupaten Biak Numfor. *Copi Susu: Jurnal Komunikasi, Politik & Sosiologi, 3*(2), 17–28. https://ejournal.iyb.ac.id/index.php/copisusu/article/view/186

Regulations

Republik Indonesia. (2021). *Undang-Undang Nomor 2 Tahun 2021 tentang Perubahan Kedua atas Undang-Undang Nomor 21 Tahun 2001 tentang Otonomi Khusus bagi Provinsi Papua*. Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 2021 Nomor 155, Tambahan Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Nomor 6697.

Republik Indonesia. (2021). *Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 106 Tahun 2021 tentang Kewenangan dan Kelembagaan Pelaksanaan Kebijakan Otonomi Khusus Provinsi Papua*. Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 2021 Nomor 238, Tambahan Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Nomor 6730.