

# **The Role of Female Members of The Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in Addressing Gender Issues in The City of Palembang**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to identify and analyze the role of female members of the Regional Representative Council (DPRD) in addressing gender issues, particularly gender-based violence against women in Palembang City during the 2024-2029 term. The analysis was conducted using Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's theory of Political Representation, with a focus on substantive representation (acting for). The research method employed was a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews with female DPRD members and representatives from the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPPA), as well as document analysis. The research findings indicate that the role of female DPRD members in responding to the surge in gender-based violence cases in Palembang City has gone beyond the bounds of formal representation. This role is demonstrated through three main dimensions. First, political accountability is built through emotional closeness with women's organizations and grassroots communities to integrate their aspirations into the local policy agenda. Second, responsiveness is manifested through intuitive sensitivity rooted in shared experiences as women, enabling them to take the initiative and create safe spaces for victims of violence. Third, effectiveness is demonstrated by optimizing technocratic interventions through oversight of local regulation drafts to ensure they are free from gender bias, monitoring gender budgeting, and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration with the DPPPA. Overall, these findings confirm that the presence of women in the legislature is not merely about fulfilling quotas, but rather about serving as agents of change who break down patriarchal barriers through a combination of emotional closeness, swift responsiveness to marginalized issues, and the courage to intervene in technocratic processes.

**Keywords :** Women in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), Substantive representation, Gender-based violence

## **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of gender inequality remains a primary focus of attention in Indonesia's development agenda. Although efforts have been made through existing policies and programs to balance access and opportunities between men and women, reality shows that many structural and cultural barriers still limit women's positions in the public sphere. This inequality is evident not only in economic, educational, and health aspects but also in political representation, where women often face unequal access to control over and benefits from development (Cahyati et al., 2018).

The concept of gender encompasses more than mere biological differences; it refers to social roles shaped by shared norms and practices. From a religious perspective, Kun Budianto (2019) asserts that Islam positions women and men as having equal status and social roles. In terms of values and opportunities, this includes education, property rights, and dignified social

participation at various stages of life. This perspective underscores women's potential to contribute to public life, including political decision-making. However, in Indonesian social practice, gender stereotypes that confine women to the domestic sphere still limit their mobility and recognition in public spaces (Novasari et al., 2022).

In politics, women's representation is crucial because public decisions determine access to resources and the protection of rights. The state has established a minimum 30% quota policy for nominations to increase women's chances of securing seats in legislative bodies. Nevertheless, quantitative measures alone do not guarantee that women's issues will be substantively addressed in legislative processes, budgeting, and oversight (Kontu & Pesak, 2025). The distinction between descriptive representation (numerical presence) and substantive representation (advocacy for group interests) is central to assessing the effectiveness of women's presence in parliament (Senjaya et al., 2025).

This local-level approach is relevant given that local governments are directly engaged with community issues. Female DPRD members can strategically utilize legislative functions to initiate gender-responsive regulations, budgetary functions to advocate for gender-responsive allocations, and oversight functions to ensure policy implementation aligns with the needs of women and vulnerable groups. However, in Palembang City, women's representation in the DPRD remains far below the 30% threshold. Data from the Palembang City DPRD Secretariat (2025) indicates that only 5 (10%) of the 50 members for the 2024-2029 term are women.

This minimal representation stands in stark contrast to the complexity of gender-related issues at play. At the provincial level, Simfoni PPA (2025) reported 626 cases of violence against women and children in South Sumatra, with 539 female victims. In Palembang City itself, a fluctuating trend is evident: 22 cases in 2023, dropping to 14 in 2024, then surging to 33 cases in 2025. It is important to note that these reported figures reflect only a small fraction of actual occurrences, illustrating the iceberg phenomenon.

The gap between women's need for protection and their low political representation highlights the urgency of assessing whether female members of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) are truly capable of playing a substantive role. Although there is a wealth of literature on participation and the implementation of quotas, studies that specifically explore the role of female DPRD members in addressing gender issues, particularly gender-based violence in the City of Palembang remain limited.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach to deeply analyze how female members of the Palembang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) address gender issues, particularly gender-based violence. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on understanding meaning, processes, and social interactions within the context of local politics, rather than on numbers or statistics. The researcher descriptively explored the views, experiences, and perceptions of key informants, such as female DPRD members and officials from the Palembang City Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPPA). Qualitative methods are exploratory, interpretive, interactive, and constructive, with the researcher serving as the key instrument studying the natural conditions of the research subjects (Sugiyono, 2022).

The data sources analyzed in this study include primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with six informants: Dr. (C.) Diana, S.Pd., M.M, Hj. Sabia Afriyana, S.E., M.M, Hj. Yulfa Cindosari, S.Ud, Dr. Syntia Rahutami, S.T., M.Si,

Yuriana, S.Sos, and Ernie Yohannis (Chair of the Gender Equality and Family Quality Team, DPPPA of Palembang City).

Secondary data was sourced from official documents of the Palembang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), local regulations, reports on the results of recess sessions, DPPPA data, as well as scientific literature such as books, journals, and relevant articles that support the field findings. From these data sources, the researcher will seek data with the aim of addressing all research questions.

Data collection techniques were conducted through direct field observation, interviews, and documentation. In this study, the research locations are the Palembang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) and the Palembang City Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPPA). The focus of this study is the role of female DPRD members in addressing gender issues, particularly gender-based violence against women in Palembang City during the 2024-2029 period.

The data analysis technique in this study involves organizing, clarifying, and interpreting the data obtained during the research to draw conclusions relevant to the research questions. Data analysis in this study employs the Miles and Huberman interactive model, as described by Sugiyono (2022), which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the researcher will discuss the role of female members of the Palembang City Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in addressing gender issues, particularly gender-based violence against women during the 2024-2029 term. This analysis was conducted using Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's (1967) theory of Political Representation, which divides political representation into four categories: formal representation, descriptive representation, symbolic representation, and substantive representation. In this study, the primary focus is on substantive representation that is, the concrete actions taken by female DPRD members in addressing and advocating for gender issues through legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions.

The success of representation is not merely measured by the quantity or physical presence of women in parliament, but by their ability to voice and advocate for women's interests. To assess the quality of this role, the researcher employed three indicators: accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness. These three indicators serve as analytical tools to understand how female DPRD members fulfill their roles in addressing gender issues in Palembang City (Pitkin, 1967; Pasolong, 2019).

The presence of female DPRD members in Palembang City is not merely about fulfilling a quota for descriptive representation. Their role is tested through the transformation of their physical presence into concrete actions in addressing gender issues, particularly gender-based violence against women. Field findings document a surge in cases of gender-based violence, reaching 33 cases by 2025, a situation demanding a substantive and concrete response. Through an analysis of indicators of accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness, this study confirms that female legislators in Palembang City have successfully aligned descriptive representation with substantive representation. They have been able to break the chain of gender

exclusion at the local level through community strategies, dialogic approaches, and technocratic interventions in legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions.

### 1. **Accountability**

Political accountability for female legislators in Palembang signifies a moral responsibility to vulnerable constituents, not merely an administrative formality. They create accessible communication channels, move away from rigid bureaucracy, and consistently ensure transparency in parliamentary performance. Active involvement in women's organizations serves as the primary channel for monitoring gender inequality. Ernie Yohannis, Head of the Gender Equality and Family Quality Division at the Palembang City PPPA Office, emphasized that female DPRD members establish accountability for their roles through close ties with women's organizations to monitor gender inequality in decision-making. Researchers observe that this engagement embodies Pitkin's substantive representation, concrete actions to incorporate gender issues into the local policy agenda. The combination of emotional closeness as descriptive representation and inclusive oversight strengthens public trust.

Overall, the accountability of female legislators in Palembang goes beyond administrative obligations. They build public trust through community networks, social organizations, and the Parliamentary Women's Caucus, integrating grassroots aspirations into both technocratic and social agendas. This is a moral commitment to making local legislation more inclusive and responsive to women's needs.

### 2. **Responsiveness**

The responsiveness of female legislators in Palembang is not merely about administrative speed, but rather an intuitive sensitivity rooted in their shared experience as women. They proactively take the initiative, rather than waiting for reports to come in, and actively create safe spaces for sensitive issues such as domestic violence and the double burden.

An analysis of responsiveness shows that female legislators transform gender identity into political action that is sensitive to marginal issues. Shared experiences break down the barriers of formality, enabling a rapid response to domestic violence and the double burden. This aligns strongly with Pitkin's concept: proactive action through dialogic and empathetic methods transcends mere representation figures, shifting masculine perspectives into inclusive, humanistic, and targeted policies.

### 3. **Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of female legislators in Palembang is measured by their tangible impact in overseeing program implementation, advocating for gender-responsive budgeting, and ensuring there is no gender bias in local regulations. Success is not about physical presence, but rather the ability to serve as advocates for women's interests.

The effectiveness of female legislators is recognized across sectors. Synergy with the PPPA Office demonstrates that their role transcends bureaucratic barriers, accelerating gender-responsive regulations. This is evidence that acting on a broad scale to transform the descriptive nature of Palembang's government work culture.

Analysis of the three indicators shows that female DPRD members in Palembang City have successfully transformed their political mandate beyond the boundaries of formal representation. Through accountability rooted in honesty and transparency, these legislators build public trust by consistently engaging with grassroots communities. This is reinforced by a high level of responsiveness, where

gender sensitivity is used as a tool to capture public concerns that are often overlooked in masculine discourse. This success does not stop at the communication aspect alone, but culminates in tangible work effectiveness, where these aspirations are successfully incorporated into gender-responsive budget policies as well as more inclusive and humanistic oversight of development programs.

Theoretically, the interconnection between these three dimensions confirms the successful synchronization between descriptive representation and substantive representation, as articulated by Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. The female identity inherent in these legislators functions not merely as a symbol of diversity in parliament but as the primary driving force behind competent action (acting for). By combining emotional closeness, speed in responding to sensitive issues, and the courage to intervene in policy, female DPRD members have proven capable of breaking down patriarchal barriers within the legislative body. These findings underscore that their role is crucial in ensuring that every piece of legislation and budget allocation in Palembang City genuinely prioritizes the protection and empowerment of women.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that female DPRD members in Palembang City have successfully transformed their physical presence into concrete actions in addressing gender issues, particularly violence against women. This is achieved through three key indicators: accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness. Female legislators have demonstrated that descriptive representation (the number of women in parliament) transforms into substantive representation (acting in the interests of female constituents) in accordance with Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's (1967) theoretical framework.

First, accountability is exercised through active engagement in women's organizations, recess mechanisms that prioritize mothers' aspirations, a data-driven technocratic approach via the Parliamentary Women's Caucus, and sustained communication with grassroots communities such as the PKK. These practices build public trust and ensure women's voices are integrated into the local policy agenda from the planning stage.

Second, responsiveness stems from shared experiences as women, enabling an intuitive sensitivity to sensitive issues such as domestic violence and the double burden. Legislators employ a dialogic and empathetic approach to take the initiative, creating safe spaces for constituents to voice issues often overlooked from a masculine perspective, and subsequently transforming them into policy priorities.

Third, effectiveness is realized through the optimization of the Regional People's Representative Council's (DPRD) three main functions: the legislative function, implemented by providing substantive input on draft Regional Regulations (Perda) to ensure the absence of gender bias; the budgetary function, through the application of gender budgeting to provide safe and comfortable public facilities for women; and the oversight function, by monitoring program implementation down to the RT/RW level. Active synergy between female DPRD members and the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPPA) strengthens the impact of the resulting policies, thereby giving them strong legal standing to protect women.

Overall, these findings confirm that the presence of women in the legislature is not merely about fulfilling quotas, but rather about serving as agents of change who break down patriarchal barriers through a combination of emotional closeness, responsiveness to marginalized issues, and the courage to intervene in technocratic processes. Their role is crucial

in ensuring that Palembang City's legal products and budget allocations genuinely prioritize the protection and empowerment of women.

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