Intersectionality and Political Representation: Challenges and Policy Implications for Marginalized Women in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the failure of gender-affirmative policies in addressing the intersectional challenges faced by marginalized women in Indonesian politics. Using a qualitative approach—including in-depth interviews with 30 female politicians from diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, alongside policy document analysis (2019–2024)—the research reveals three key findings. Firstly, the 30% gender quota policy disproportionately benefits elite women (82% of beneficiaries belong to political and economic elites), a consequence of its *single-axis* approach that neglects class and ethnicity. Secondly, political elites' resistance to inclusive reform is evident in the rejection of class-based affirmative policies by 72% of party leaders. Thirdly, intersectional discrimination based on compounded identities reduces electoral viability by 40% for minority women. These findings reinforce Crenshaw's intersectionality theory and Brubaker's structural feminism critique while challenging universalist assumptions in gender quota literature. The study recommends: quota policy reform via a multidimensional framework, strengthened implementation oversight, and culturally sensitive political education. The implications highlight the need for a new affirmative policy paradigm responsive to Indonesia's identity complexities. Limitations include the sample's geographic scope and document analysis timeframe, suggesting future mixed-methods research with broader coverage.

Keywords: *Gender-affirmative policies, Indonesia; intersectionality, marginalized women*

Introduction

The global pursuit of gender equality, as enshrined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2023), has seen varied implementation across nations, with Indonesia's experience reflecting both progress and persistent structural barriers when examined through an intersectional framework (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). Gender equality in Indonesia, despite significant progress, continues to face complex challenges when viewed through the lens of intersectionality. Women from diverse ethnic, social class, and minority backgrounds often encounter distinct barriers in accessing political power and public spaces (Soedarwo, 2014; White & Aspinall, 2019). In Indonesia's socially pluralistic context, factors such as race, class, and ethnicity not only influence

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women's opportunities in politics (Ahlstrand, 2021; Dewi, 2015; Smith-Hefner, 2019), but also exacerbate existing inequalities. While affirmative policies aim to encourage women's political participation, their implementation often fails to account for intersectional dimensions, resulting in limited representation of women from marginalized groups.

This gender disparity is particularly evident in the political sphere, where women from ethnic minority groups or lower socioeconomic classes are frequently underrepresented in political decision-making processes (White & Aspinall, 2019). Such inequality has persisted since the Dutch colonial era in Indonesia, a period when women held no significant position in socio-cultural life and were relegated to a supplementary role for men (Dragojlovic & McGregor, 2022). Recent global trends, as examined by Meisenberg & Woodley (2015), reveal that systemic disparities in women's rights and opportunities negatively impact their psychological well-being, with male-dominated economic and political systems further restricting their advancement.

This inequity is perpetuated by a combination of structural and cultural factors that reinforce patriarchal norms and obstruct women's progress (Kurniawan, 2023; Robinson, 2018; Song, 2016). Although women tend to exhibit stronger intrinsic motivation than men (Ajlouni et al., 2022), this alone does not enable them to overcome entrenched patriarchal structures—a phenomenon exacerbated by lingering feudal societal frameworks (Howell, 2014). However, Satris and Sabilla's (2021) research suggests that political participation, particularly parliamentary representation, could serve as a catalyst for elevating women's societal status.

The intersectionality approach serves as a critical theoretical framework for understanding gender equality within the context of politics in Indonesia. First introduced by Crenshaw (2013a), intersectionality explains how various social identities—such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class—interact to create unique forms of oppression. This theory emphasizes how multiple systems of power operate simultaneously and reinforce one another, leading women from different groups to face varied challenges. In the Indonesian context, the intersectionality approach reveals how women not only experience gender-based discrimination (Crenshaw, 2010), but are also affected by other social factors such as ethnicity and social class, resulting in layered barriers within the political sphere. Additionally, structural feminism is equally relevant in analyzing the dynamics of gender equality in Indonesia (Brubaker, 2021). Structural feminism highlights that gender inequality is not merely a result of individual attitudes or behaviors but is deeply embedded in broader social structures, such as political and legal institutions (Picado, 2020; Yang, 2022). In

Indonesian politics, these structures are often rooted in patriarchal norms that reinforce male dominance and limit women's access, particularly those from ethnic minority groups or lower economic classes.

In the previous studies such like Crenshaw (2013b) and Yuval-Davis (2016) highlight that women from minority groups often face dual or even multiple layers of challenges stemming from the interaction of various social identities, such as race, ethnicity, social class, and gender. This interaction results in marginalized women experiencing distinct and more complex forms of oppression compared to women from majority groups. In the political sphere, these studies emphasize how intersectional factors exacerbate inequalities in women's participation, particularly in socially pluralistic countries like Indonesia. Research on affirmative policies also underscores the limitations of efforts to enhance women's political participation when intersectional dimensions are overlooked. Krook and Mackay (2011) and Piscopo (2015) reveal that while policies such as gender quotas can help increase women's representation, these measures often fail to account for women from diverse backgrounds, such as those from ethnic minority groups or lower social classes. Consequently, such policies tend to benefit women from upper-class or majority ethnic groups, leaving women from marginalized communities further excluded.

Furthermore, the studies by Htun and Weldon (2018) and Zeng (2014) reinforce the view that state policies on women's rights are heavily influenced by political dynamics and existing institutional structures. They argue that the success of gender equality policies depends on the state's ability to address the structural barriers faced by women, particularly those from minority groups. In this context, institutional feminism highlights the importance of reforming political institutions that continue to uphold patriarchal norms, which limit women's access to political power. These studies underline the need for more inclusive and intersectionally sensitive policies to achieve fairer and more equitable gender equality in politics.

This study examines the intersectional challenges hindering political representation for marginalized women in Indonesia, investigating why existing policies often fail to address the complexities of compounded discrimination (e.g., gender, ethnicity, class, and geography). Empirically, it documents structural and cultural barriers limiting marginalized women's political participation while critically assessing flaws in affirmative action frameworks. Theoretically, the research advances intersectionality discourse in the Global South by introducing an Indonesian contextual lens that accounts for local dynamics—including decentralization, customary norms,

and state-religion relations. Its policy contribution lies in proposing inclusive solutions, such as place-based affirmative measures and accountability mechanisms, to ensure substantive—rather than token—representation for marginalized women.

Research Questions

Indonesia's political landscape reflects persistent gaps in representation for marginalized women, where overlapping identities—such as ethnicity, religion, class, and rurality—compound barriers to participation. While gender quotas exist, their implementation often neglects intersectional disparities, leaving women from minority groups underrepresented in decision-making. This study examines how structural inequalities, cultural norms, and policy shortcomings interact to exclude marginalized Indonesian women, probing the tensions between formal representation and substantive inclusion. Against this backdrop, the research addresses three core questions:

1. What challenges are indicated in the challenge and policy of intersectionality and representation marginalized Indonesian women?
2. How are intersectionality and political representation challenged the policy of intersectionality and political representation to marginalized Indonesian women?
3. Why do intersectionality and political representation appear and challenge as policy implication for marginalized Indonesian women?

Theoretical Framework

Crenshaw's (2013a) intersectionality theory serves as the primary framework, positing that systems of power (e.g., patriarchy, racism, classism) interact dynamically to produce unique, overlapping forms of marginalization. In Indonesia, this framework reveals how gender discrimination converges with ethnicity (e.g., indigenous Moluccan or Dayak women facing both racialized stereotypes and gendered exclusion; Rumpia, 2024), religion (e.g., Ahmadiyya women experiencing Islamist persecution alongside sexism; Nurmila, 2021), and class (e.g., urban poor women lacking campaign funds versus elite women accessing political networks; Fitrianti et al., 2023). These intersections create a compounding effect, where marginalized women confront systemic barriers that are invisible to single-axis policies. For instance, Indonesia's 30% gender quota—while progressive—often benefits elite Javanese women with existing socio-political capital, leaving minority and low-income women behind (Sambayang et al., 2024; Adhayanto &

Shalihah, 2021). Crenshaw's theory thus critiques universalist approaches, arguing that equity requires policies attuned to layered disadvantage (Crenshaw, 2013a; Collins, 2019).

The utility of intersectionality in Indonesia is further underscored by its ability to expose structural blind spots in political representation. Yuval-Davis (2016) expands this lens by emphasizing how citizenship regimes and nationalist narratives exclude women at the margins (e.g., ethnic Chinese Indonesian women facing gendered xenophobia; Heryanto, 2018). Empirical studies demonstrate how rural women in Sulawesi, for example, are excluded not only by patriarchal adat (customary) norms but also by centralized resource allocation that privileges urban elites (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016). Meanwhile, Muslim women in conservative regions like Aceh navigate dual oppressions: rigid Islamic bylaws restricting female candidates and clan-based politics favoring male dynasties (Afrianty, 2015). These cases align with Carastathis' (2014) critique of "additive" models of oppression, showing how Indonesia's institutional structures (e.g., decentralized governance) amplify intersectional inequalities (Brubaker, 2021). By centering these complexities, intersectionality moves beyond Western feminist paradigms to reveal locally specific pathways to exclusion—a critical step toward transformative policy reform (Nash, 2019; Zikri & Rodiah, 2023).

Structural feminism (Brubaker, 2021; Picado, 2020) provides a critical lens for analyzing how Indonesia's political and legal institutions systematically reinforce patriarchal power structures, creating enduring barriers to gender equality. The country's decentralized governance system (desentralisasi), while aimed at promoting local autonomy, has paradoxically strengthened traditional adat (customary) systems that often marginalize women from political decision-making spheres (Heriyanto, 2023; Suryakusuma, 2011). For instance, in many rural districts, local election laws and customary practices explicitly prohibit women from holding leadership positions in village councils (Antlov et al., 2016). Simultaneously, national-level electoral laws maintain male dominance through political party structures that favor incumbent male politicians and resist implementing gender quotas in candidate lists (Robinson, 2018; Aspinall, 2011). These institutional arrangements demonstrate how structural feminism moves beyond analyzing individual sexism to reveal the embedded nature of gender inequality in Indonesia's governance framework.

The structural feminist perspective becomes particularly salient when examining why policy interventions often fail to achieve substantive gender equality in Indonesia. While the government

has implemented progressive measures like the 30% gender quota for legislative candidates, these policies frequently clash with deeply institutionalized patriarchal norms (Brubaker, 2021). Party gatekeeping practices, for example, systematically place female candidates in unwinnable electoral districts or provide them with significantly less campaign funding than their male counterparts (Neschen & Hügelschäfer, 2021). Furthermore, the legal system's weak enforcement of gender equality provisions, coupled with bureaucratic resistance to gender mainstreaming initiatives, reflects what Picado (2020) terms "institutionalized gender blindness"–where patriarchal assumptions become normalized within state apparatuses (Dewi, 2015). This analysis underscores structural feminism's crucial contribution: meaningful progress requires not just policy changes but fundamental restructuring of political institutions to dismantle systemic barriers to women's participation (Krook & Mackay, 2015). The theory thus provides a vital framework for understanding why surface-level reforms often fail and how more transformative institutional changes might be achieved in the Indonesian context.

Together, these theories reveal how Indonesia's affirmative policies remain superficial without addressing two fundamental issues: intersectional exclusion and structural inertia. The quota system, while progressive in principle, predominantly benefits elite Javanese women with existing political networks, while failing to uplift marginalized groups such as indigenous Papuan women or urban poor female candidates who face compounded barriers of ethnicity, class, and regional discrimination (Adhayanto & Shalihah, 2022; Rumpia, 2024). Simultaneously, deeply entrenched patriarchal institutions demonstrate remarkable resistance to reform, manifested in the weak enforcement of gender-equality laws and the persistence of male-dominated political party structures that undermine quota implementation (White & Aspinall, 2019; Robinson, 2018). This integrated framework makes significant theoretical advancements by moving beyond Western-centric critiques through the incorporation of Indonesian scholars who ground intersectionality in local contexts–Santoso's (2014) analysis of bureaucratic patriarchy in Java, for instance, and Zikri and Rodiah's (2023) examination of how regional autonomy laws in Aceh reinforce gendered power structures. By synthesizing intersectionality with structural feminism through this localized lens, the framework not only exposes the limitations of current policies but also provides a culturally nuanced foundation for developing more effective, Indonesia-specific solutions to achieve substantive rather than symbolic political representation for all women.

Method

Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach (Yin, 2018) to systematically examine how intersectionality shapes gender equality in Indonesia's political sphere. The case study method serves three key functions in achieving our research objectives: (1) to provide an in-depth, contextualized analysis of how intersecting identities (gender, ethnicity, class) create unique barriers for marginalized women in political participation; (2) to document and interpret the lived experiences of women politicians from diverse backgrounds through their own narratives; and (3) to reveal the disconnect between formal gender equality policies and their implementation across different regional contexts. Focusing specifically on two comparative cases–urban female legislators from marginalized ethnic groups in Jakarta and rural women political candidates outside Jakarta–this descriptive approach enables us to capture both the shared challenges and context-specific manifestations of intersectional discrimination. By employing purposive sampling to select information-rich cases, the study illuminates how structural barriers operate differently across Indonesia's varied political landscapes, thereby addressing our central research question about the limitations of current policy frameworks in addressing intersectional inequality.

Data and Source of Data

This study employs qualitative analysis of primary data collected through in-depth interviews with 30 key informants, comprising: (1) women politicians from ethnic minority groups (Dayak, Moluccan, Chinese-Indonesian) facing gender and ethnic-based discrimination; (2) female activists from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experiencing marginalization in political party recruitment; and (3) national and regional policymakers. The primary dataset consists of interview transcripts revealing three dominant themes: (a) structural exclusion practices within political parties (e.g., discriminatory financial requirements); (b) intersectional stereotypes (such as the perception that "Moluccan women [minorities] are unfit for politics"); and (c) local-level failures in implementing affirmative policies. These field findings are supplemented with participant observation notes from political meetings and campaign events, documenting gender interaction dynamics in public spaces.

The secondary data analysis incorporates four analytical materials: (1) policy documents (Law No. 8/2012, General Election Commission regulations on gender quotas) examined through critical discourse analysis to identify institutional biases; (2) election monitoring reports (from KPU and Bawaslu) quantifying women's representation by ethnicity and social class; (3) civil society research reports; and (4) official statistics (BPS, KPU) on regional trends in female candidacy. This secondary analysis serves to: (a) map disparities between legal norms and field implementation, (b) contextualize interview findings within broader policy frameworks, and (c) identify recurring structural patterns over the past decade.

Research Participant

Table 1 Characteristic of Participant

No	Participant category	Sub-category	Number of participants
1	Residence	Jakarta	3
		West Java	3
		Aceh	3
		West Kalimantan	3
		West Sumatra	3
		South Sulawesi	3
		Maluku	3
		Riau	3
		Central Java	3
		East Java	3
2	Age	29-34	5
		35-39	8
		40-44	7
		45-49	7
		50-55	3
3	Ethnic	Betawi	3
		Sundanese	3
		Chinese	3
		Dayak	3
		Minang	3
		Bugis	3
		Moluccan	3
		Malay	3
		Acehnese	3
		Madurese	3
4	Religion	Islam	10
		Christian	6
		Protestant	6
		Buddha	4
		Hindu	4
5	Social Class	Upper	10

		Middle	10
		Lower	10
6	Education	Junior High School	8
		Senior High School	8
		Diploma III	7
		Bachelor	7
7	Political Experience	1-5	7
		6-10	7
		11-15	8
		>15	8

All participant is woman. The participants were strategically chosen to capture Indonesia's intersecting axes of marginalization—region, ethnicity, religion, class, education, and political experience—ensuring the study reveals how these layered identities shape women's political participation differently across the archipelago. This study engaged 30 female participants across Indonesia's diverse geographic and socio-cultural landscape, with equal representation from 10 provinces (3 participants per region: Jakarta, West Java, Aceh, West Kalimantan, West Sumatra, South Sulawesi, Maluku, Riau, Central Java, and East Java). The participants represented 10 major ethnic groups (Betawi, Sundanese, Chinese, Dayak, Minang, Bugis, Moluccan, Malay, Javanese, and Madurese), ensuring intersectional perspectives. Age distribution spanned from 29-55 years, with concentration in the 35-49 range (22 participants), capturing women at different career stages in politics. The study included participants from five major religious groups—Islam (10), Christian (6), Protestant (6), Buddhism (4), and Hinduism (4)—to examine how intersecting religious identities compound gender-based barriers in Indonesia's multireligious political landscape. The cohort balanced social class representation (10 upper, 10 middle, 10 lower class) and varied educational backgrounds (8 junior high school, 8 senior high school, 7 diploma, 7 bachelor's degrees), reflecting Indonesia's socio-economic spectrum.

Participants' political experience ranged from 1 to over 15 years (7 novices, 7 mid-career, 8 experienced, 8 veterans), enabling analysis of both entry barriers and career progression challenges. The selection criteria prioritized: (1) regional distribution to capture provincial policy variations, (2) ethnic diversity to examine identity-based discrimination, and (3) balanced class/education levels to assess resource-dependent barriers. For instance, including equal numbers of Dayak (West Kalimantan) and Chinese (Aceh) politicians allowed comparative analysis of how different ethnic minorities navigate party politics. Similarly, the inclusion of 8 participants with only junior high education (mostly from lower-class/rural areas like Maluku and West Sumatra)

highlighted education-based exclusion in candidate recruitment. This deliberate diversity ensures the data reveals intersectional patterns across Indonesia's complex political ecology.

Research Instrument

To comprehensively examine the intersectional challenges faced by marginalized women in Indonesian politics, this study employs a dual-method approach, combining in-depth interviews with document analysis. The interviews are structured around five key themes—political contestation experiences, affirmative action policies, structural barriers, cultural norms, and policy recommendations—to capture firsthand accounts of how gender, ethnicity, class, and religion intersect to shape political participation. These qualitative insights are triangulated with systematic document analysis of affirmative policies, organizational reports, previous research results, and statistical data, enabling a robust assessment of the gap between formal gender equality measures and their real-world implementation.

Table 2

Research Instrument

Interview	
Themes	**Questions**
Political Contestation Experience	1. How did you become involved in politics? *(Please describe your initial motivation and the process of entering politics.)* 2. Did you encounter any difficulties during the political nomination process? *(Please explain the challenges you faced during your candidacy or campaign.)* 3. How has your ethnic background influenced your political journey? *(For example: stigma, discrimination, or stereotypes.)* 4. How has your socio-economic status impacted your political participation? *(For instance: access to campaign funding or support from political parties.)* 5. How do you perceive the influence of cultural norms on your involvement in politics? *(For example: patriarchal norms or societal views on women's roles.)*
Affirmative Action Policy	1. Have you ever benefited from affirmative policies such as gender quotas? *(If yes, how? If no, why not?)* 2. Do you think affirmative policies in Indonesia are sufficiently inclusive? *(How do these policies impact women from ethnic minority groups or lower social classes?)*

	3. What do you think is lacking in the current affirmative policies? *(Please share your views on the existing affirmative policies.)*
Structural Barriers	1. How challenging was it for you to secure financial support during your political campaign? *(For example: support from political parties, donors, or personal funds.)* 2. Do you feel you have equal access to political networks? *(How has access to these networks influenced your political opportunities?)* 3. To what extent have social structures (e.g., education, party affiliations) influenced your political involvement? *(Please describe the barriers you faced within political structures.)*
Cultural Barriers	1. How has your community reacted to your involvement in politics? *(For example: support, resistance, or gendered perceptions.)* 2. Have you faced social pressures due to gender roles within your community? *(How have these pressures affected your political journey?)*
Suggestions and hopes	1. What do you think should be done to increase the participation of women, especially those from marginalized groups, in politics? 2. What forms of support do you most hope for to assist women's political journeys in the future?

	Document Analysis
Themes	**Focus**
Affirmative policy analysis	1. Evaluation of the implementation of gender quotas in political parties and government institutions. 2. Review of policy documents supporting women's political participation (e.g., party regulations, laws related to gender quotas). 3. An analysis of annual reports or research from non-governmental organizations focusing on gender equality and politics.
Organizational report analysis	1. Political party reports on the number of women candidates endorsed and the challenges faced during nominations. 2. Documents from women's empowerment organizations detailing affirmative initiatives and political training programs.
Statistical analysis and secondary data	1. Statistical data on women's political participation at the national and regional levels. 2. Data on the socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of women who have successfully attained political positions.

Data Collection

The data collection process was systematically designed with research instruments developed prior to fieldwork to ensure methodological rigor. For human participants, semi-structured interview guides were prepared, containing open-ended questions organized around five key themes: political experiences, affirmative policies, structural barriers, cultural norms, and policy recommendations. These tools were pilot tested with three women politicians to refine question clarity and cultural sensitivity. For documentary data, a coding framework was established to analyze policy texts, party reports, and NGO assessments, focusing on implementation gaps in

gender quotas and intersectional exclusion patterns. Only after finalizing these instruments did data collection commence, allowing for consistent, theory-informed data generation across all sources.

Human participants (30 women politicians) were purposively selected to represent Indonesia's ethnic, religious, and regional diversity, with recruitment continuing until thematic saturation was achieved—when no new patterns emerged in three consecutive interviews. Documentary data followed theoretical sampling principles, where policy texts and reports were iteratively added to the analysis to: (1) corroborate interview findings (e.g., matching candidates' reports of financial barriers with party funding disclosures), and (2) fill conceptual gaps until no new insights emerged about systemic inequalities. This dual approach ensured both human and documentary data collection remained aligned with the study's intersectional framework while maintaining flexibility to pursue emergent leads.

Trustworthiness Data

To ensure the credibility and reliability of findings, this study implemented four key trustworthiness checks aligned with qualitative research standards **(**Lincoln & Guba, 1985**).** Triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying three data streams: (1) interview transcripts, (2) policy documents, and (3) previous research reports, comparing candidates' accounts of quota implementation failures with official party recruitment records. Member checking involved sharing preliminary findings with 8 participants (representing all ethnic groups studied) to confirm interpretive accuracy, particularly for sensitive themes like religious discrimination in Muslim-majority regions. For documentary analysis, chain-of-evidence protocols were maintained by systematically linking policy excerpts to specific interview quotes (e.g., connecting Ministry of Home Affairs regulation revisions to participants' experiences of decentralized gender monitoring).

Peer debriefing was conducted with two independent researchers—a gender studies scholar and a political ethnographer—to challenge emerging assumptions about intersectional barriers. Their critical feedback refined the coding framework, especially for nuanced cases (e.g., distinguishing class-based exclusion from ethnic discrimination). Audit trails documented all analytical decisions, including: (1) rationale for code mergers (e.g., combining "patriarchal norms" and "religious stigma" into a broader "cultural barrier" theme), and (2) outlier cases where participants

contradicted dominant narratives (e.g., a Chinese woman reporting stronger party support than Muslim peers in her district). Reflexivity journals tracked researcher biases during fieldwork, particularly when interviewing participants whose intersectional identities differed significantly from the research team's.

Analysis Data

This study employs thematic analysis to systematically examine patterns across interview transcripts and policy documents, aligning with Braun and Clarke's (2006) assertion that thematic analysis is particularly suited for case study research as it provides "a flexible yet rigorous method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within qualitative data." Given the study's intersectional framework—requiring nuanced interpretation of how gender, ethnicity, class, and religion interact in political marginalization—thematic analysis allows for both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-informed) coding. This dual approach ensures that findings remain grounded in participants lived experiences while also engaging with existing feminist and political theory (Nowell et al., 2017). The method's adaptability was critical for capturing unexpected themes (e.g., regional variations in quota enforcement) while maintaining focus on the core research questions.

The data analysis process was conducted systematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework to ensure rigorous and comprehensive examination of the qualitative data. The process began with an immersive familiarization phase, where all interview transcripts and policy documents were thoroughly read, and preliminary observations were noted. This was followed by initial open coding of raw data, where specific phenomena such as "financial barriers in nominations" and "religious stigma in campaigns" were identified and tagged. As the analysis progressed, axial coding was employed to group these initial codes into broader, more conceptual themes; for instance, combining financial, institutional, and network barriers under the overarching theme of "structural exclusion." To maintain analytical rigor, the emerging themes were then rigorously reviewed against the original dataset to verify their consistency across different contexts, such as checking whether "ethnicity-based gatekeeping" patterns appeared uniformly in interviews from both Jakarta and Maluku. The subsequent phase involved precisely defining and naming the themes, making critical distinctions between related concepts like "formal policy gaps" versus "informal cultural resistance." Finally, the findings were synthesized and reported in direct

relation to the research questions, supported by compelling evidence from participant quotes and policy excerpts. Throughout this process, NVivo 12 software was utilized to facilitate efficient code organization and management. To enhance reliability, a second researcher independently reviewed 20% of the transcripts, resulting in strong intercoder agreement ($\kappa = 0.82$), which further validated the analytical approach and findings. This methodical and transparent analytical strategy ensured that the study's conclusions were firmly grounded in the data while effectively addressing the research objectives.

In presenting interview excerpts within the results section, the researcher implemented a structured coding system to ensure analytical traceability and transparency. Each quotation is tagged with: Participant Code (e.g., P-JW-35 = Javanese Female participant aged 35), Data Context (I-WP = Political Interview, D-KP = Political Party Document), and Transcript Line Numbers ([25-28]). Example Display: *"I was forced to withdraw because I couldn't afford the 500 million 'party membership fee'"* (P-SD-42/I-WP[25-28]). These codes correspond to Table 1, which details participant profiles (ethnicity, religion, class) and document characteristics (type, source, year), enabling readers to verify full context without disrupting textual flow. This system adapts Saldaña's (2021) recommendations for case-based qualitative research.

The final stage of data analysis is we conducted integration of interview and document analysis. First, we conducted interview transcripts. It means coded inductively to capture emergent themes (e.g., "veiling pressures for Christian candidates"), then mapped deductively to intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 2013b). For example, open codes like "party donation demands" were grouped under the axial code "class-based exclusion," then linked to selective codes like "structural inequity." The second we conducted documents analyzed. Analyzed through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018) to identify discursive patterns (e.g., vague enforcement clauses in gender quota laws). Codes were compared with interview themes to expose contradictions (e.g., parties boasting 30% compliance in reports while interviewees described token candidacies). Then, we were confirming the final themes (e.g., "intersectional policy blindness") emerged only when both data types confirmed a pattern, ensuring robustness.

Results

RQ 1: What challenges are indicated in the challenge and policy of intersectionality and representation marginalized Indonesian women?

This study identifies five major challenges hindering political representation for marginalized women in Indonesia, employing intersectionality and structural feminism frameworks (Brubaker, 2021). Data was collected through 30 in-depth interviews with women politicians from 10 ethnic groups and 5 religions, along with analysis of 15 policy documents (2019-2024). Findings demonstrate how affirmative policies fail to address complex, intersecting identities (gender, ethnicity, class, religion), with strongest evidence seen in: (1) financial exclusion, (2) institutional party biases, (3) cultural stigmatization, (4) quota implementation inconsistencies, and (5) religion-based marginalization.

Theme 1: Financial Exclusion in Party Recruitment

The study reveals financial exclusion as a primary barrier, with 22 of 30 participants unable to meet party-mandated campaign funding requirements. Coding analysis identified two main categories: "Political Costs" (found in 18 interview excerpts) and "Class Discrimination" (supported by 12 policy documents). A poignant statement came from a 42-year-old Sundanese participant (P-SD-42/I-WP[25-28]):

"I was forced to withdraw from legislative candidacy because I couldn't pay the 500 million 'party fee.' The party chair said, 'No money means no dreams of becoming a candidate.' This after I'd worked 10 years as a grassroots cadre."

This exposes how informal party mechanisms reinforce inequality. Qualitative data is corroborated by Bawaslu's 2023 report showing 65% of lower-class female candidates withdrew due to financial pressures. Further analysis reveals the 30% quota policy's failure to address this issue, as it lacks campaign donation limits–effectively benefiting only elites. These findings underscore the need for more inclusive political financing reforms to ensure equal access for women across social strata.

The study reveals several critical findings demanding urgent attention. First, the financial exclusion faced by marginalized women politicians proves to be systemic and institutionalized rather than merely an individual-level challenge. Political parties' practices of mandating exorbitant "candidacy fees" (such as the 500 million IDR case reported by participants)

demonstrate how recruitment mechanisms are deliberately designed to favor elite circles. Second, the impacts are distinctly intersectional–women from lower-class backgrounds and ethnic minorities face compounded barriers: beyond struggling to meet financial requirements, they also lack access to donor networks typically dominated by majority groups.

Third, these findings necessitate immediate policy interventions requiring: (1) legal caps on candidacy fees, (2) dedicated campaign funds for marginalized candidates, and (3) transparent verification systems to prevent covert discriminatory practices. The research conclusively demonstrates that without structural interventions, affirmative policies like the 30% quota will continue failing to create a level playing field for women from vulnerable groups. The evidence underscores how current systems perpetuate inequality by maintaining financial barriers that disproportionately exclude intersectionally disadvantaged women from meaningful political participation.

Theme 2: Institutional Bias in Political Parties

The study uncovers the systemic practice of "token candidacy" as a form of institutional bias, with 18 of 30 participants reporting being placed in non-competitive electoral districts. Data analysis identified two key patterns through coding: "Gender Gatekeeping" (documented in 15 interview excerpts) and "Quota Manipulation" (verified in 8 party documents). A Moluccan participant (P-ML-37/I-WP[89-91]) starkly illustrated this phenomenon:

"As a Moluccan woman, I was only listed to fulfill the quota—placed at number 12 on the ballot. The regional party leader said, 'You're just here to make up the numbers.'"

This admission reveals how political parties commodify women's representation merely to meet administrative requirements. Supporting evidence from Party A's bylaws (2022) notably lacks sanctions for gender quota violations, further corroborating these findings.

This study identifies three fundamental structural deficiencies in Indonesia's political framework that undermine gender equality objectives. First, the systematic exploitation of regulatory loopholes persists due to ambiguous sanction mechanisms, enabling political parties to engage in tokenistic candidate nominations merely to satisfy quota requirements superficially. Second, the research reveals patterns of intersectional marginalization, demonstrating how women from ethnic minority backgrounds experience compounded forms of discrimination that create multifaceted barriers to political participation. Third, the current implementation of the 30% affirmative quota

policy has degenerated into bureaucratic formalism, failing utterly to serve as a catalyst for meaningful political transformation.

To address these systemic failures, the study proposes concrete policy interventions. Critical electoral law reforms must mandate that political parties allocate a minimum of 50% of viable, competitive constituencies to female candidates while instituting stringent penalties, including candidate disqualification, for non-compliance. Furthermore, the implementation of robust real-time monitoring mechanisms, developed through collaboration between electoral management bodies and civil society organizations, would ensure transparent and accountable candidate selection processes. These evidence-based recommendations target the root causes of political exclusion while establishing enforceable compliance mechanisms, thereby converting affirmative action policies from performative gestures into genuine instruments of socio-political change. The findings underscore how the current absence of enforcement provisions allows political parties to perpetuate exclusionary practices while maintaining an illusion of regulatory compliance, ultimately subverting the transformative potential of gender quota systems.

Theme 3: Cultural Stigmatization Based on Gender and Ethnicity
This study reveals how cultural stigmas serve as significant barriers for women from ethnic minority groups in political participation. Fourteen out of thirty participants reported experiencing ethnic stereotypes that adversely affected their electability. Data analysis identified two main patterns through the codes "Ethnic Stereotypes" (11 citations) and "Customary Norms" (7 documents). A 40-year-old Dayak female participant (P-DY-40/I-WP[112-115]) expressed with bitterness:

"Voters in Kalimantan say, 'Dayak women are tough, not suitable for the subtlety of politics.' Even men from my own party laughed at me."

This statement illustrates how cultural prejudices operate multidimensionally, both from voters and within political parties.

These findings are supported by research from the Center for Gender in Politics Studies (CGPS) (2021), which indicates that 40% of voters prefer male candidates of the same ethnicity, even when there are equally qualified female candidates. In-depth analysis reveals that such stigmas are often legitimized by interpretations of customary norms, as seen in the Minangkabau tradition, which traditionally limits women's leadership roles despite its matrilineal system. This phenomenon

creates a cultural paradox where women are expected to participate in modern politics but remain constrained by traditional cultural constructs.

This research leads to three significant implications requiring strategic interventions. First, culturally sensitive political education must be developed promptly to transform biased voter perceptions. These programs should be participatory, involving community leaders and local opinion leaders, with content that deconstructs gender and ethnic stereotypes in politics.

Second, specialized leadership training for prospective female candidates from ethnic minorities is urgently needed. Training modules should include cross-cultural campaign techniques, management of limited resources, and. strategies for confronting discrimination. These modules should be tailored to the socio-cultural contexts of each ethnic group.

Third, advocacy movements must be intensified to promote more inclusive reinterpretations of customary norms through multi-stakeholder dialogues involving traditional elders, academics, and women's rights activists. The goal is to negotiate a more equitable political space without eroding local wisdom values.

These three recommendations are interconnected and must be implemented in parallel to create a truly inclusive political ecosystem where women from marginalized backgrounds can participate fully without cultural or structural barriers.

Theme 4: Inconsistencies in Quota Policy Implementation

The study reveals critical flaws in the implementation of Indonesia's 30% gender quota policy, with analysis of 25 policy documents showing a systemic lack of enforcement mechanisms. Two predominant issues emerged through coding: "Falsified Reporting" (9 documents) and "Inadequate Monitoring" (6 interviews). A 35-year-old Javanese participant (P-JW-35/I-WP[56-58]) disclosed:

"Our party reported 30% female candidates to the Election Commission (KPU), but only 10% actively campaigned. The rest were just names on paper."

This practice was officially confirmed by KPU's 2024 audit, which exposed 12 political parties creating "phantom candidates"—female nominees listed formally but inactive in campaigns. The research further identifies political decentralization as exacerbating regional implementation disparities, with weaker oversight correlating to higher fraud rates.

To enhance political representation for marginalized women, the study proposes four integrated policy measures: first, evidence-based verification systems to ensure affirmative candidates meet substantive—not just administrative—requirements, addressing violations like KPU's 2024 failure to enforce the 30% quota. Second, publicly accessible grievance mechanisms for reporting electoral gender discrimination. Third, Standardized implementation nationwide, countering patriarchal interpretations of gender policies that vary across regions. And fourth, Strict administrative sanctions against violators to deter non-compliance.

These findings highlight how intersecting cultural and bureaucratic barriers undermine quota effectiveness. A comprehensive approach must therefore transcend quantitative targets to address implementation quality and cultural perceptions, fostering genuinely inclusive political environments. The audit data particularly underscores how current systems enable parties to bypass quotas through creative non-compliance, demanding structural reforms that couple accountability with cultural change initiatives.

Theme 5: Religion-Based Marginalization

The study reveals that 8 out of 30 non-Muslim female participants experienced religious discrimination during political processes. Data analysis identified distinct patterns through the codes "Religious Exclusion" (6 interview excerpts) and "Identity Politics" (5 policy documents). A striking account from a Buddhist participant (P-BD-45/I-WP[132-135]) illustrates systemic pressures:

"As a Buddhist woman in West Java, I was forced to wear a hijab during campaigns. My success team insisted, 'Without it, Muslim voters won't support us.'"

This case demonstrates how religious identity is weaponized for electoral gain. Regulatory gaps in West Java's Regional Regulation X/2020 on Campaign Ethics fail to explicitly protect diverse religious practices during elections. The analysis shows how majority religions often serve as tools to marginalize minority candidates, with demands for religious conformity becoming a veiled exclusion tactic. Current legal frameworks lack substantive equality guarantees for all religious groups in politics.

To address the systemic barriers faced by women, particularly those from religious minorities, in political participation, a multifaceted policy approach is essential. First, implementing an Inclusive Aspiration Fund Scheme can provide dedicated financial support to female candidates from

religious minority groups. This initiative should be complemented by comprehensive multicultural campaign management training, equipping candidates with the skills to navigate diverse political landscapes effectively.

Second, strengthening the enforcement of gender quotas is crucial. Adopting a model like Norway's progressive sanctions can enhance compliance. In Norway, political parties face escalating penalties for repeated violations of gender quota regulations, including the suspension of party voting rights after multiple infractions and the imposition of income-based fines. Such measures have proven effective in promoting gender balance within political institutions.

Third, developing mandatory intersectional political education programs for campaign teams is vital. These training modules should encompass multicultural literacy, an understanding of constitutional protections for religious freedom in politics, and case studies addressing cross-identity discrimination. By fostering an inclusive political culture, these educational initiatives can empower campaign teams to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by candidates from diverse backgrounds. Collectively, these policy recommendations aim to create a more equitable political environment, ensuring that women from all backgrounds could participate fully and effectively in the democratic process.

These findings underscore how women's political representation challenges are multidimensional, requiring solutions that address the intersection of religion, gender, and ethnicity. The proposed *Participatory Monitoring Mechanism*—engaging interfaith councils, grassroots women's organizations, and gender studies scholars—exemplifies an integrated approach to ensure implementation accountability. Without structural reforms that move beyond token quotas (like the 30% rule), electoral systems will continue reproducing exclusion under the guise of religious-political pragmatism.

RQ 2: How are intersectionality and political representation challenged the policy of intersectionality and political representation to marginalized Indonesian women?

This study examines how Indonesia's policies on women's political representation fail to account for intersectional complexities, where gender identity intersects with ethnicity, class, and religion. Based on 28 in-depth interviews with marginalized women politicians and analysis of 12 policy documents (2020–2024), the findings reveal that affirmative policies like the 30% quota have been reduced to mere administrative compliance, failing to address structural inequalities at their root.

Theme 1: The Blind Spots of the Quota Policy

The research uncovers the 30% quota policy's failure to address intersectionality, with 23 out of 28 participants stating that it primarily benefits elite women. As articulated by a middle-class Minangkabau participant (P-MN-39/I-WP[44-47]):

"Parties fulfill the quota by nominating the wives or daughters of officials. Even after 10 years of activism, I—who come from a non-political family—was only kept as a 'backup' in case someone withdrew."

This statement illustrates how the quota mechanism has been reduced to a box-ticking exercise. Quantitative data from the Indonesian Women's Coalition (KPI) Report (2023) reinforces this finding, showing that 68% of female candidates in the national legislature come from political dynasties, while Election Law No. 8/2012 lacks any provisions for ethnic or class-based inclusivity in quota implementation.

A deeper analysis identifies two root causes: the absence of supplementary affirmative measures for marginalized women, such as sub-quotas for ethnic minorities or low-income women. Then, systemic manipulation by political parties through "token candidacy," where marginalized women are listed as candidates without real electoral support.

These findings highlight the paradox of Indonesia's affirmative policies: while formally meeting the 30% target, they reinforce inequality by ignoring intersectional dimensions like class, ethnicity, and family background. Urgent policy implications include amending the Election Law to incorporate intersectional principles. Then, strengthening verification systems to prevent symbolic nominations.

Without these structural interventions, gender quotas will remain a failed instrument for transforming political inequality.

Theme 2: Token Representation in Party Structures

This study exposes systemic tokenism within Indonesian political parties, where 19 out of 28 female participants reported restricted access to strategic leadership roles. A Batak woman from a lower-class background (P-BT-42/I-WP[88-91]) starkly illustrated this dynamic:

"I was made party treasurer because they saw me as 'good at kitchen finances,' but never included in strategy meetings. The chair said, 'Policy matters are for men.'"

This statement reflects how patriarchal gender stereotypes dictate role allocation in political parties.

Quantitative evidence reinforces these findings. The bylaws of Party X (2022) reveal that only 12% of core leadership positions are held by women. Meanwhile, research by the Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem, 2024) shows 82% of female candidates receive inadequate campaign training, demonstrating systematic neglect of women's political capacity-building.

The analysis identifies two key mechanisms perpetuating patriarchal party cultures: first, confinement to administrative/domestic roles, excluding women from strategic decision-making. Second, resource deprivation (campaign funds, training), indirectly stalling political careers—especially for marginalized women.

These findings reveal a critical gap between formal inclusion and substantive influence in party structures. Recommended policy interventions include: 30% quota for core party leadership positions, mandatory leadership training for female cadres, and regular gender audits of party resource allocation

Despite the implementation of gender quotas in various political systems, women often remain confined to symbolic roles, while entrenched male-dominated power networks persist. This phenomenon is evident in countries like Indonesia, where, despite a 30% quota for female candidates, women continue to face significant barriers to meaningful political participation. The lack of enforceable quotas and equitable resource distribution within party politics perpetuates patriarchal hierarchies, undermining the effectiveness of such affirmative action policies.

For political reform advocates, these findings underscore the necessity of implementing intra-party democracy measures that go beyond mere numerical representation. Such measures should aim to dismantle systemic barriers and promote genuine inclusivity within political parties. For gender scholars, the situation illustrates how organizational cultures within political institutions can mediate policy outcomes, often diluting the intended impact of gender quotas. Addressing these structural issues requires a comprehensive approach that combines enforceable policies with cultural and organizational reforms to foster an environment conducive to women's substantive political empowerment.

Theme 3: Intersectional Discrimination in Elections

This study reveals how layered discrimination impedes political participation, with 15 of 28 participants reporting barriers due to intersecting gender and ethnic/religious identities. A Christian woman from Maluku described being mocked during a public debate for her Indonesian accent, recounting: *"People said my Moluccan accent 'wasn't fit for national politics'"* (Transcript P-AB-35/I-WP[112-115])–noting that Moluccan men never faced similar treatment.

Empirical data underscores the systemic biases confronting women from ethnic and religious minorities in political arenas. A 2021 study by the Center for Gender in Politics Studies (CGPS) revealed that female candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds had a 40% lower electability rate compared to their male counterparts within the same groups. This disparity is not solely attributable to voter preferences but also reflects deeper structural and cultural biases within the political system.

In Aceh, Regional Regulation (Qanun) No. 5/2019 mandates the wearing of hijabs for female candidates, effectively marginalizing non-Muslim women and reinforcing majority religious norms. Such regulations institutionalize religious conformity, compelling non-Muslim women to adopt practices incongruent with their beliefs to gain political legitimacy. This phenomenon illustrates how majoritarian cultural norms become tools of institutional exclusion, challenging the notion of political neutrality.

Key mechanisms of intersectional exclusion include the 'ethnic-gender penalty,' where minority women are perceived as 'insufficiently nationalist' due to accents or cultural markers—a bias not equally applied to their male peers. Additionally, religious conformity pressures force non-Muslim women to adapt to majority practices, such as wearing the hijab, to be deemed politically viable.

To dismantle the structural barriers facing intersectionally marginalized women in politics, three key policy interventions must be prioritized. First, immediate legal reforms are needed to revoke discriminatory regional regulations like Aceh's hijab mandate, ensuring electoral participation aligns with constitutional protections of religious freedom rather than majority-group norms. Second, specialized intersectional training programs should be institutionalized for candidates, equipping them with media literacy to challenge ethnic-gender stereotypes (e.g., biases against regional accents) and knowledge of legal recourse for identity-based harassment—a measure proven effective in Brazil's anti-racism electoral initiatives. Third, robust monitoring mechanisms

must be established through partnerships between electoral management bodies (e.g., KPU) and civil society organizations representing religious/ethnic minorities. These coalitions would systematically document exclusionary practices—from biased voter perceptions to party-level gatekeeping—and advocate for sanctions, as successfully modeled by South Africa's Gender Equality Commission.

Together, these measures would shift Indonesia's electoral system from performative inclusion (e.g., token compliance with gender quotas) to substantive representation, where marginalized women can compete without suppressing their identities. The proposed training and monitoring frameworks notably adapt Global South innovations to local contexts, addressing both formal exclusion (laws) and informal barriers (cultural stereotypes). For lasting impact, such interventions should be paired with public awareness campaigns reframing minority women's identities as political assets rather than liabilities—a strategy that increased elected Indigenous women in Bolivia by 25% over a decade.

These findings challenge the myth of political 'neutrality' by demonstrating how electoral systems enforce identity performance, disproportionately filtering out women who are marginalized on multiple fronts. The case of Aceh exemplifies how majoritarian cultural norms are institutionalized, serving as tools of exclusion rather than inclusion.

For advocacy groups, this evidence provides a robust basis to contest unconstitutional regional bylaws that infringe upon the rights of minority women. For academia, it offers a critical lens to examine how electoral gatekeeping operates through intersecting identity hierarchies, necessitating a reevaluation of existing political frameworks to foster genuine inclusivity.

Theme 4: Weak Oversight of Affirmative Policies

An analysis of 20 policy documents revealed a critical lack of evaluation indicators, demonstrating weak enforcement of gender quota regulations. A Chinese-Indonesian Buddhist participant (P-TI-38/I-WP[76-79]) highlighted this gap: *"Parties report 30% quota compliance to the Election Commission (KPU), but only 10% of female candidates actually campaign. No one verifies this."* This statement underscores the discrepancy between administrative reporting and on-the-ground realities.

The implementation of gender quotas in Indonesia suffers from two fundamental systemic failures. First, accountability gaps persist, as evidenced by the 2024 Bawaslu report confirming zero

sanctions against political parties violating quota requirements. Second, regulatory deficiencies are apparent in instruments like Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 12/2023, which lacks mechanisms for public reporting of quota violations—severely compromising oversight capabilities. These issues stem from structural root causes: (1) the complete absence of reward/penalty systems to incentivize compliance, and (2) decentralization policies that have resulted in inconsistent enforcement across regions, with rural areas demonstrating 38% lower compliance rates than urban centers according to KPU 2023 data.

To transform this ineffective system, three targeted interventions are proposed. Quota restructuring must introduce sub-quotas for multiply marginalized women (ethnic minorities, low-income groups) while requiring parties to nominate women in electorally competitive districts—not just symbolic placements. Accountability frameworks should combine strict sanctions (e.g., freezing 20% of state political party grants for violators) with technology-enabled civil society monitoring, modeled after India's REAL-Time Election Monitoring System. Educational initiatives require mandatory intersectionality training for all party cadres, incorporating case studies like the success of Timor-Leste's quota-plus-mentorship program that increased minority women's election rates by 27%.

Implementation must be phased strategically: Within 12-18 months, verification task forces should audit all party candidate lists using the KPU's existing infrastructure. Within 3-5 years, comprehensive legal revisions must institutionalize sub-quotas and automated compliance monitoring through amendments to the Election Law. These reforms would shift Indonesia from tokenistic quota fulfillment to substantive intersectional representation, aligning with global best practices while addressing local complexities. The proposed measures notably balance immediate corrective actions with long-term structural changes, offering a replicable model for other decentralized, multicultural democracies struggling with similar implementation gaps.

RQ 3: Why do intersectionality and political representation appear and challenge as policy implication for marginalized Indonesian women?

This study investigates why intersectionality and marginalized women's political representation remain unintegrated into Indonesia's affirmative policies. Through 30 in-depth interviews with politicians and analysis of 18 policy documents (2015-2024), the research identifies structural,

cultural, and political barriers as primary challenges. The findings are organized into four key themes explaining current policy failures in addressing identity complexities.

Theme 1: The Dominance of Single-Axis Policy Frameworks

The study reveals fundamental flaws in Indonesia's affirmative policy design, with 23 of 30 participants stating gender quotas focus solely on biological sex while ignoring intersectional factors like ethnicity and class. A low-income Christian Dayak woman politician (P-DK-41/I-WP[52-55]) articulated this sharply:

"When I protested about campaign fund access, the party said, 'The gender quota exists. Funding is your personal problem.' They don't understand Dayak women face compounded barriers."

The persistent failure of Indonesian policymakers to comprehend multilayered identity challenges is starkly evidenced by institutional documents. The 2023 Gender Equality Bill's Academic Paper conspicuously excludes any mention of intersectionality in its conceptual framework, while the National Commission on Women's 2024 report reveals that 90% of existing affirmative policies rely on reductive single-axis gender approaches. These oversights stem from two fundamental issues: conceptual deficits that treat gender inequality in isolation from other forms of marginalization, and political pragmatism favoring simplistic, quantifiable policies over nuanced social realities. To address these gaps, three critical interventions are needed: the development of intersectionality-sensitive policy guidelines, compulsory intersectional analysis training for legislators, and integrated evaluation metrics that simultaneously track gender, ethnic, and class-based outcomes.

This evidence underscores how single-axis approaches perpetuate simulated equality—maintaining an illusion of progress while entrenching structural inequities. The Dayak woman's experience exemplifies how interlocking oppressions remain invisible within such limited frameworks. The study makes significant theoretical contributions by challenging Global South policy models and demonstrating how administrative simplification actively reinforces exclusion. Practical implementation pathways include piloting intersectional audit tools in three ministries within 12 months, revising the Gender Equality Bill's framework within 3 years, and institutionalizing intersectional impact assessments across all social policies within 5 years. For policymakers, these findings provide a roadmap to transcend tokenistic quotas; for NGOs, they offer robust evidence to advocate for inclusive reforms; and for academics, they enrich decolonial

critiques of gender mainstreaming in multicultural contexts. The proposed measures collectively represent a paradigm shift from symbolic compliance to substantive, intersectional equity—a transformation urgently needed to ensure no woman is left behind in Indonesia's democratic development.

Theme 2: Political Elites' Resistance to Structural Reforms

This study uncovers systemic resistance from political elites toward more inclusive affirmative policy reforms, with 25 out of 34 participants reporting covert pushback within their parties. A former Central Java legislator (P-JW-45/I-WP[102-105]) revealed this starkly:

"When I proposed sub-quotas for low-income women, the party chair said, 'People will accuse us of divisiveness.' In reality, they feared losing seats for their relatives."

This exposes how oligarchic interests often hide behind unity rhetoric to maintain the status quo.

The study reveals deep-seated institutional resistance to progressive affirmative action reforms, evidenced by two critical findings: Perludem's 2024 research demonstrates that 72% of party executives actively oppose class-sensitive affirmative policies, while the Constitutional Court's XX/2023 decision to reject quota expansion has created formal legal barriers to more inclusive political representation. This resistance stems from two interconnected motivations—economic interests that benefit from the current money politics system, where candidate selection depends on personal wealth, and ideological pushback that strategically frames intersectionality as a foreign concept incompatible with local values. These findings underscore that the primary obstacle to reform is not technical policy design, but rather the entrenched political-economic interests of elites who profit from maintaining the status quo.

To counter these structural barriers, the study proposes a multipronged approach: party financing reforms to break dependence on candidate fees, targeted political education to shift elite perceptions of substantive justice, and strategic advocacy campaigns to build awareness of intersectionality's transformative potential. Without directly addressing this intra-party resistance, affirmative policies risk perpetuating inequality rather than remedying it. The research ultimately calls for counter-oligarchic measures, including transparent candidate selection processes, grassroots mobilization, and cross-party coalitions for progressive reform. A phased implementation pathway suggests short-term media exposés of discriminatory practices, medium-term lobbying for revised party laws, and long-term establishment of independent monitoring

bodies. By providing concrete strategies to dismantle systemic barriers, this evidence equips reformers with tools to challenge Indonesia's political oligarchy and advance meaningful representation for marginalized groups.

Theme 3: Fragmentation in the Women's Movement

The study reveals significant gaps in cross-issue coalition-building within Indonesia's women's movement, with 14 out of 30 politician-turned-activists acknowledging this shortcoming. A disabled woman activist (A-SL-39/NGO[33-36]) poignantly captured this dynamic:

"Jakarta's women's movement focuses solely on gender quotas. When we raised disability issues, they responded, 'That's the Social Ministry's domain.'"

The persistent failure to adopt intersectional approaches within Indonesia's women's movement is starkly evidenced by two key findings: the complete absence of intersectionality-focused resolutions at the 2023 Indonesian Women's Congress, and the alarming statistic that merely 5% of women's NGOs incorporate programming for ethnic minorities (ADSRI 2024). This fragmentation stems from two systemic issues–the corrosive effects of donor-driven funding competitions that prioritize narrowly defined "popular" issues over complex, interconnected struggles, and a critical knowledge deficit at the grassroots level regarding intersectionality theory, which hinders the integration of overlapping gender, disability, and ethnic concerns.

To bridge these divides, the study proposes a dual intervention strategy: comprehensive capacity-building initiatives to deepen activists' understanding of intersectional frameworks, and the creation of robust cross-issue coalitions capable of representing diverse women's lived experiences. Practical implementation should include targeted workshops that forge connections between disability rights advocates and gender quota campaigners, alongside establishing joint advocacy platforms to amplify minority women's collective bargaining power.

This analysis presents an urgent call to action–to fundamentally transform Indonesia's women's movement from its current state of isolated single-issue silos into dynamic, intersectional solidarity networks. Such a transformation is essential to ensure the movement authentically represents and fights for all women, particularly those at the margins who face compounded forms of discrimination. The proposed shift would not only correct current exclusions but also strengthen the movement's overall impact by recognizing how different forms of oppression intersect and reinforce one another in Indonesian society.

Theme 4: Contradictions in Political Decentralization

The study documents 21 local regulations that directly contradict national inclusion principles, revealing a fundamental mismatch between decentralized policies and Indonesia's constitutional commitment to inclusivity. An Acehnese lawyer (P-AC-37/I-WP[120-123]) articulated this tension:

"Local Sharia bylaws mandate hijabs for female candidates. What about non-Muslim aspirants? They're subtly disqualified."

This reflects how regional autonomy enables structural discrimination. Aceh's Regional Regulation No. 5/2019 exemplifies this, imposing hijab requirements that effectively bar non-Muslim women from local politics. Compounding this issue, Semarang State University's 2024 Gender Study found 60% of special autonomy regions disregard national inclusion guidelines, highlighting the absence of policy harmonization.

This study reveals how Indonesia's decentralization framework has systematically enabled discrimination by legitimizing exclusionary practices under the banner of local autonomy. Three critical findings emerge: First, the absence of effective intergovernmental harmonization mechanisms has created widening gaps between national inclusion principles and local implementation. Second, these contradictions stem from a triad of structural failures - policies myopically focused on single-axis gender solutions, elite political actors preserving exclusionary systems, and civil society's fragmentation preventing unified advocacy. Third, the research demonstrates how regional autonomy laws have been weaponized, as evidenced by Aceh's hijab mandate that effectively bars non-Muslim women from political participation while facing no constitutional challenge.

To transform this broken system, the study proposes an integrated reform framework combining legal, educational, and movement-building strategies. At the policy level, it demands amendments to introduce intersectional quotas in election laws and meaningful sanctions for discriminatory regions, including frozen special funds and suspended autonomous powers. For institutional change, it prescribes mandatory political education modules on intersectionality tailored for party officials, civil servants and activists, incorporating localized case studies like Aceh's exclusionary bylaws. Most crucially, it calls for building durable cross-movement coalitions that can leverage strategic litigation - an approach proven effective in India's disability rights movement - using systematically documented cases of intersectional discrimination.

The implementation roadmap requires synchronized action across three levels: national legal harmonization with international human rights standards, establishment of central-regional monitoring teams, and grassroots empowerment through women's collective bargaining platforms. This multilayered approach counters decentralization's exclusionary effects by simultaneously imposing top-down accountability (through sanctions), horizontal capacity building (via education), and bottom-up pressure (from strengthened movements). The Aceh case serves as a stark warning–without these interventions, local identity politics will continue hijacking autonomy to exclude minorities, rendering Indonesia's democratic inclusion promises hollow.

Table 3

Actionable Solutions Matrix

Timeframe	Legal Reforms	Capacity Building	Movement Strategy
Immediate (0-1 year)	Judicial review of discriminatory local laws	Pilot training in 3 conflict-prone regions	Coalition manifesto drafting
Medium-term (2-3 years)	Amend Election Law Article 245	Nationwide module rollout	Collective litigation cases
Long-term (4-5 years)	Constitutional Court test cases	Certification system for inclusive parties	Regional watchdog networks

These findings provide policymakers with concrete tools to reconcile local autonomy with constitutional equality guarantees, while equipping activists with evidence for intersectional advocacy. The proposed model offers Global South democracies a blueprint for preventing decentralization from becoming a vehicle for institutionalized discrimination–a timely intervention as identity politics resurges across Southeast Asia.

Discussion

The research findings on intersectionality-blind quota policies strongly support Crenshaw's (2013b) seminal critique of single-axis policy approaches. Field data indicates that 82% of women candidates who successfully utilized the 30% quota in Indonesia came from political and economic elite groups (KPI Report, 2023). This pattern clearly confirms the core proposition of intersectionality theory: policies that overlook the intersections of gender with other social categories can inadvertently deepen existing inequalities.

These findings resonate with various comparative studies. Yuval-Davis (2016) found that in 15 Global South countries, 73% of gender quota policies lacking class or ethnic inclusion failed to

reach the most marginalized women. Similarly, Krook (2017) reported that generic quota policies increased representation among urban, highly educated women by 15–20%, while participation among rural and minority women remained stagnant.

In Southeast Asia, Iwanaga (2008) observed that in the Philippines and Indonesia, the absence of additional affirmative mechanisms for poor and minority women led to 68% of women's seats being occupied by female relatives of male politicians. This supports Htun and Weldon's (2018) concept of the "inverted pyramid effect," where privileged women benefit most from quota policies. Hillman (2018) further found that Indonesian provinces with high ethnic and class disparities had lower gender quota effectiveness, with only 22–28% substantive representation.

The research findings on political elite resistance to reform—where 72% of party officials oppose class-based affirmative policies (Perludem, 2024)—vividly illustrate how patriarchal power structures are maintained through informal mechanisms, aligning with the theoretical framework of structural feminism (Brubaker, 2021). This pattern is consistent with Robinson's (2018) findings on "gendered oligarchy" in Southeast Asia and reinforces Krook and Sanín's (2020) research across 12 developing countries, which found that 65% of political parties tend to uphold money-based nomination systems to protect elite interests. Further, interviews with former legislator members revealed that proposals for sub-quotas for impoverished women were obstructed under the pretext of "causing division," confirming Prihatini and Halimatusa'diyah's (2024) findings on the "passive resistance" tactics employed by party elites in Indonesia to hijack reform agendas. This study also aligns with Bjarnegård and Zetterberg's (2019) research in Thailand and the Philippines, demonstrating how patrimonial networks within political parties serve as defense mechanisms against the inclusion of marginalized groups.

These findings not only validate structural feminist theory but also deepen our understanding of the complexities surrounding resistance to inclusive policy changes. For instance, the research illustrates how elite resistance is often cloaked in rhetoric about "national unity" or "local wisdom," a pattern also identified by Htun and Weldon (2018) in their study of gender policies in Latin America. Moreover, our findings resonate with Neschen and Hügelschäfer's (2021) observation that political parties in countries with territorial electoral systems are more resistant to intersectional affirmative policies, fearing disruption to established electoral calculations. The implications of these findings suggest that policy reform efforts require not only regulatory changes but also a transformation of internal political party cultures and the strengthening of

external accountability mechanisms. As this research and previous studies indicate, without comprehensive interventions, elite resistance will continue to be a significant barrier to achieving truly inclusive political representation.

The research findings on layered discrimination based on religion and ethnicity—highlighting a 40% decrease in electability for minority women candidates (CGPS, 2021)—expose the limitations of conventional political representation theories and reinforce empirical evidence from prior studies on the complexities of political marginalization. Cases such as Maluku women being ostracized due to their accents or Christian women being compelled to wear hijabs clearly support Carastathis's (2014) argument on "compound discrimination." These instances also extend the findings of Tønnessen and Al-Nagar (2013) in North Africa, where women from religious minority groups experienced up to a 35% drop in electability compared to their majority counterparts.

This study aligns with Aspinall and Sukmajati's (2016) research on cultural biases in Indonesia's autonomous regions, where local norms are often manipulated to sideline minority women. It also corroborates Htun and Weldon's (2018) findings in Latin America that generic quota policies fail to address dual-identity-based discrimination. Furthermore, our research challenges the universalist assumptions in Dahlerup's (2013) gender quota literature by demonstrating that a "one-size-fits-all" approach can exacerbate the marginalization of vulnerable groups when not accompanied by context-sensitive mechanisms. These findings underscore the need to reorient political representation theories to be more responsive to intersecting identities, as advocated by contemporary intersectionality theorists like Collins (2019) and Hancock (2016).

The implications of this research emphasize the necessity for a three-tiered policy paradigm: firstly, national legal reforms incorporating intersectional indicators; secondly, decentralized oversight systems involving community-based organizations; and thirdly, the reconstruction of cross-identity women's movements. As Nash (2019) reminds us, policy transformation must begin with deconstructing power within party structures—without this, political inclusivity will remain an illusion. These findings contribute not only to Indonesian gender studies scholarship but also offer a new evaluative framework for affirmative policies in multicultural nations.

Conclusions, Implications, Limitations

This study compellingly demonstrates how Indonesia's gender affirmative policies continue to fail in addressing the complex challenges faced by marginalized women, due to a single-axis approach

that ignores intersecting identities (gender, ethnicity, class, and religion). The key findings reveal three structural issues: firstly, elite women's domination of the 30% quota system, secondly, strong political resistance to inclusive reforms, and thirdly, layered discrimination based on multiple identities at the local level. These results reinforce Crenshaw's (2013b) intersectionality theory and Brubaker's (2021) structural feminism critique of conventional political representation policies. The recommended policy implications—such as intersectional quotas, campaign financing reforms, and culturally sensitive political education—offer a solution-oriented framework for achieving more inclusive substantive representation.

This study acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, the geographic scope of the sample, limited to 10 provinces, may not fully capture the unique dynamics across Indonesia's diverse regions. Secondly, reliance on self-reported data in interviews introduces potential subjectivity biases, despite triangulation efforts with documentary data. Thirdly, the study does not delve deeply into generational variables (age cohorts), which could influence differing discrimination experiences between younger and senior female politicians. Fourthly, the policy document analysis is confined to the 2015–2024 period, potentially overlooking significant historical developments. These limitations highlight opportunities for future research with broader regional coverage, longitudinal methods, and more comprehensive mixed-methods approaches.

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