

Research Article

Policy Network for the 2024 General Election Implementation in Riau Province as Reviewed from the Lens of Women's Representation

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Abstract.

This paper analyzes the implementation of Indonesia's 2024 General Election in Riau Province through the lens of women's representation and the policy network among key actors. Drawing on official election documents, regulations, and statistical reports, we map interactions between the Provincial General Election Commission (KPU), the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), political parties, media, and civil society organizations. Riau's Daftar Calon Tetap (DCT) for the provincial parliament comprised 895 candidates, 293 of whom were women ($\approx 32.7\%$), exceeding the statutory 30 percent threshold. Yet structural and cultural barriers continue to limit substantive representation, including tokenistic candidate placement, uneven party compliance, financing constraints, and fragmented inter-institutional coordination. Using a policy network framework, we identify gaps in enforcement, information flows, and resource exchange that reduce the effectiveness of affirmative action. We recommend strengthening legal enforcement, building joint gender taskforces, supporting party-level candidate pipelines, enhancing gender-sensitive political finance, and investing in leadership development for women candidates. The study contributes a provincial case that connects quota compliance to policy network quality, offering lessons for subnational electoral governance in Indonesia.

Keywords: policy network, women's representation, gender quota, electoral governance, Riau province, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Women's descriptive and substantive representation in elected bodies remains a critical indicator of democratic quality and social inclusion. In Indonesia, Law No. 7/2017 and KPU regulations mandate political parties to nominate at least 30 percent women on candidate lists for legislative elections. This formal rule functions as an affirmative action instrument but its translation into effective representation depends on actor behavior, enforcement mechanisms, and broader socio-political norms. Riau Province economically strategic, ethnically diverse, and politically competitive offers a revealing

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subnational arena to study how legal mandates interact with party strategies, election administration, and civic advocacy. This paper employs a policy network perspective to examine how organizations interact during the 2024 election cycle and how these interactions shape opportunities and constraints for women candidates.

Historically, women's representation in Indonesia's parliament has fluctuated. In the first democratic elections of 1955, women secured only around 6.3 percent of parliamentary seats. Reformasi and the subsequent enactment of affirmative action policies marked a turning point, culminating in the 2003 election law that first introduced the 30 percent quota. However, progress has been incremental: women won 11.8 percent of DPR seats in 1999, 17.9 percent in 2009, and 20.5 percent in 2019. These national trends contextualize the challenges at the provincial level, where compliance with quotas often masks disparities in candidate viability and electability.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The policy network approach conceptualizes public decision-making as the product of interdependent actors connected by resource exchanges, rules of access, and patterns of collaboration or conflict. Applied to elections, the network includes electoral authorities (KPU, Bawaslu), political parties, candidates, media, civil society organizations (CSOs), and knowledge institutions. Gender quota research differentiates between descriptive outcomes (the share of women nominated and elected) and substantive outcomes (policy influence), with effectiveness shaped by quota design, enforcement, placement mandates, and party incentives. Cross-national evidence shows that quotas raise women's presence when combined with enforceable sanctions, placement rules, and supportive political culture. Indonesian studies highlight persistent bottlenecks: clientelistic party nomination, campaign financing hurdles, and patriarchal norms that influence candidate recruitment and voter perceptions.

Globally, Rwanda remains the most cited case, achieving over 60 percent women in its lower house through constitutional quotas and strong party enforcement. Latin American countries such as Argentina and Mexico have also institutionalized placement mandates, requiring women candidates to be alternated with men on lists. In Southeast Asia, the Philippines has achieved relatively high levels of representation without legal quotas, largely due to dynastic politics, whereas Vietnam enforces guideline quotas through party mechanisms. These cases highlight the importance of enforcement, placement, and political culture in shaping quota outcomes.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative policy network analysis combined with descriptive statistics. Primary legal sources include Law No. 7/2017 and relevant KPU regulations. Empirical data are compiled from official announcements of the Riau Provincial KPU regarding the Daftar Calon Tetap (DCT) for DPRD Riau 2024 and contemporary media reports summarizing DCT composition. We triangulate these with statistics from BPS and comparative references from UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Analytical steps: (1) mapping actor roles and ties; (2) extracting numerical indicators of women's descriptive representation; (3) assessing enforcement and coordination mechanisms; and (4) formulating policy options.

The methodology is strengthened by triangulating quantitative and qualitative sources. Document analysis of electoral regulations and official announcements is complemented by secondary reports from credible media and research organizations. Descriptive statistics are used to measure compliance, while network analysis focuses on actor interdependence, resource flows, and coordination structures. Limitations include reliance on publicly available data and the absence of primary field interviews due to time constraints.

4. Results

4.1. Composition of the 2024 Riau provincial DCT

Based on the Riau Provincial KPU's DCT announcement and corroborating media coverage, the DPRD Riau 2024 candidate list comprised 895 candidates across 18 political parties. Of these, 602 were men and 293 were women, equivalent to approximately 32.7 percent women on the provincial list. This exceeds the 30 percent legal quota and indicates formal compliance at the list level, though distribution across electoral districts and party ranks remains uneven.

The DCT figures mark a slight improvement from the Daftar Calon Sementara (DCS) stage, which listed 282 women among 884 candidates ($\approx 31.9\%$). Nonetheless, compliance at the aggregate level does not automatically translate into electability: candidate placement within party lists and concentration of women in less competitive districts can dilute quota impact.

TABLE 1:

No	Indicator	Value	Note
1	Total candidates (DCT) DPRD Riau 2024	895	18 parties
2	Male candidates	602	-
3	Female candidates	293	≈32.7% of total
4	Female share in DCS (Aug 2023)	282 of 884 (31.9%)	Preliminary list before DCT

Longitudinally, women’s representation in the Riau DPRD has increased from 8 seats (12.3%) in 2014 to 10 seats (15.3%) in 2019, and preliminary projections suggest modest gains for 2024, pending electoral outcomes. Distribution across districts remains uneven, with urban centers like Pekanbaru showing higher female candidacy compared to rural constituencies. This pattern reflects structural access advantages in more urbanized districts, including higher educational attainment and stronger organizational support networks.

4.2. Party-level patterns and pipeline issues

Pre-DCT reporting showed variation across parties in nominating women. Some parties presented higher absolute numbers of women during the DCS stage (e.g., Perindo and Gerindra), but final DCT composition and the distribution of women in winnable slots require closer scrutiny. Interviews and secondary reports indicate that women frequently face higher barriers to campaign financing and network access, which can influence intra-party ranking and district assignment.

4.3. Administrative and supervisory arrangements

The KPU’s formal mandate to ensure quota compliance is complemented by Bawaslu’s oversight role. However, enforcement tends to focus on list-level numerical thresholds rather than qualitative placement rules. At the operational level, coordination across agencies and with civil society tends to be episodic strong during statutory milestones (DCS, DCT, campaign period) but weaker in sustained candidate development and voter education.

5. Discussion: Policy Network Dynamics

A policy network perspective reveals a multi-actor system with asymmetrical resources. KPU sets rules and verifies compliance; Bawaslu monitors and adjudicates disputes; parties allocate nominations and campaign resources; media shape narratives; CSOs, universities, and women's groups supply training and advocacy. Low party and CSO linkages restrict candidate pipeline development, whilst data is not transparent inhibiting evidence based interventions. Better information could create better incentives and strategically directed support for women candidates (open candidate data, district-level gender breakdowns and placement indicators).

The comparative insights gained from experiences within Southeast Asia clearly indicate that the overall effectiveness and impact of quotas for female political representation are significantly influenced by various factors, including the specific mandates related to placement, the incentives that political parties provide, as well as the sanctions they might impose, along with the comprehensive training and financial mechanisms that are put in place to support these initiatives. In this context, Riau serves as a crucial reminder of the importance of moving beyond just the mere numbers of compliance with these quotas; it highlights the necessity of adopting innovative and interconnected strategies that not only adhere to quota regulations but also actively support candidates on the ground in a meaningful and impactful way.

When we take a closer look at the inter-provincial variations that exist within Indonesia, it becomes quite illustrative of the diverse experiences and challenges faced by women in politics across different regions of the country. This particular excerpt delves into the intriguing ways that various provinces in Indonesia exhibit differing levels of female political involvement and participation. For example, in West Sumatra, there has been a consistent trend of disappointingly low numbers of women stepping forward as candidates, a situation that undeniably points to the influence of longstanding patriarchal traditions that are deeply entrenched in the local culture. On the other hand, Central Java has experienced a more positive trajectory, as evidenced by the higher success rates in female political candidacy, which can be attributed to the presence of a strong and supportive network of women's organizations and academic collaborations that have successfully contributed to the cultivation of well-prepared and high-quality female candidates for political office. Meanwhile, Riau finds itself positioned somewhere in between these two extremes, as it manages to fulfill the basic requirements for female

representation yet continues to grapple with enduring systemic and economic obstacles that hinder greater progress and achievement in this vital area.

6. Policy Implications and Recommendations

1. **Enforcement with Placement Sensitivity:** In order to significantly bolster and amplify the active involvement of women in the realm of politics, it is absolutely essential to strategically position them in more competitive and high-stakes slots on party lists that will truly enable them to shine and make an impact. Moreover, it is imperative that there be proportional sanctions for any sort of non-compliance, which should extend far beyond merely satisfying numerical targets, as we need to ensure that the commitment to gender equality is taken seriously and is backed by meaningful consequences. A thoughtful and phased approach to this initiative is also an incredibly wise and effective strategy that can yield remarkable results. In the short term, we can dramatically enhance the regulatory enforcement mechanisms and promote transparency in political processes, paving the way for a more equitable environment. The medium term should be dedicated to a concerted effort aimed at scaling up investments in training programs for candidates, as well as improving their access to financial resources, which are crucial for empowering potential female leaders. Looking towards the long term, there is a pressing need for comprehensive educational reforms and the incorporation of civic curricula that actively work to dismantle deeply rooted patriarchal norms, thereby normalizing the concept of women in leadership positions. This multi-layered and dynamic strategy ensures that mere compliance with quotas does not just become a statistic but translates into genuine, sustainable gender parity within the political landscape. By implementing these strategies with enthusiasm and dedication, we can create a vibrant and inclusive political arena where women can thrive and lead effectively. Together, we can foster an environment that not only embraces diversity but also champions the indispensable contributions of women in shaping our political future!
2. **Data Transparency:** To enhance transparency, political parties should enthusiastically publish comprehensive data on female candidates at both the district and party levels! This exciting information should encompass their ranking on the party list and whether they hold current office. By making this data available to the public,

media outlets and civil society organizations (CSOs) will be empowered to actively monitor and celebrate progress.

3. **Financing Access:** We need to launch pilot programs to provide financial support to women candidates, especially first-time candidates in areas with limited resources. This program will include financial assistance for gender-sensitive campaigns and small grants.
4. **Capacity and Mentorship:** Institutionalize pre-candidacy training pipelines in partnership with universities and women's groups, targeting strategy, fundraising, and media engagement.
5. **Joint Gender Taskforce:** Establish KPU–Bawaslu–CSO taskforces at provincial and district levels to coordinate voter education, anti-disinformation, and recruitment drives focused on women.
6. **Media Partnerships:** Encourage local media to adopt gender-sensitive reporting guidelines to normalize women's leadership and reduce bias.

7. Conclusion

For the 2024 election cycle, Riau successfully met the 30% quota, with roughly one-third of its official candidate list being women. However, achieving true representation goes beyond just meeting a number. Gaps in policy networks specifically in how rules are enforced, how resources are accessed, and how different organizations coordinate are holding back women's ability to be elected and have real influence. To fix this, we need to improve regulations and work together to invest in better data transparency, stronger candidate pipelines, and effective financial tools.

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