

Has Women's Participation in Local Government Been Strengthened? A Legal and Political Analysis in Riau Province?

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Abstract

This research delves into the critical role of women within the Village Consultative Body in Siak, Indonesia, with the aim of bolstering their involvement in local community empowerment endeavors. Employing a comprehensive sociological-legal research approach and drawing from a diverse array of data sources—ranging from primary field research to secondary and tertiary literature—the study offers profound insights into the multifaceted dynamics of women's roles within these bodies. Despite strides made in recent years towards gender equality, the study reveals persistent limitations hindering women's full participation in the Village Consultative Body. Cultural norms, deeply ingrained in societal structures, often perpetuate traditional gender roles, constraining women's agency in decision-making processes. Additionally, disparities in education levels and limited access to resources further marginalize women's involvement. However, amidst these challenges, the study illuminates the invaluable contributions of women to community development within the

Village Consultative Body. Their participation not only brings diverse perspectives to the decision-making table but also fosters the development of better human resources within the community. In light of these findings, the study advocates for concerted efforts to bolster women's engagement in local governance structures. This includes initiatives aimed at challenging and reshaping entrenched cultural norms that inhibit women's agency, as well as addressing systemic barriers to education and resource access. Furthermore, recognizing the vital role of women in community development, the study underscores the need for targeted interventions to support and empower women within the Village Consultative Body. In conclusion, the research underscores the imperative of addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by women in their pursuit of equality and active participation in local developmental processes. By fostering an environment that values and amplifies women's voices and contributions, local governance structures can become more inclusive, responsive, and effective in addressing the diverse needs of their communities.

KEYWORDS *Women's participation, Village Consultative Body, Local Government, Democracy*

Introduction

Women are often considered a second-class group (subordinate) and continue to face various problems that result in inequality of rights with men, especially in the public sphere¹. However, in the demands of an increasingly globalized era, the role of women in various aspects of life is becoming increasingly important². Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages also accommodates the role of women in village development. Despite the important role of women in development, women's participation in the public sphere still faces significant obstacles³.

¹ Very Wahyudi, "Peran Politik Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Gender," *Politea: Jurnal Politik Islam* 1, no. 1 (2018): 63–83.

² M. Darwin Muhajir, *Negara Dan Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: Media Wacana, 2005).

³ Wahyudi, "Peran Politik Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Gender."

The role of women in community development, including in terms of socioeconomics and education, has an important contribution to the equitable distribution of development results and the development of better human resources⁴. Meanwhile, Shihab states that women have the right to work⁵, as long as the work is done respectfully and does not have a negative impact on themselves and their environment⁶. Although women's main role is often considered limited to the domestic sphere, their presence in development cannot be ignored^{7,8}. But in fact, although efforts have been made to increase women's participation in various sectors of life, especially through regulations and policies that accommodate the role of women⁹, the reality is that there are still gaps that need to be addressed in more depth. This is in line with the findings of a number of studies that show that women still experience discrimination and limited access in various fields, including in political participation and community empowerment^{10,11,12}.

In the midst of the challenges and limitations faced by women, there has been a paradigm shift in society's view of their role¹³. Women in Indonesia, including in Siak, have shown intelligence and significant contributions in various fields of development¹⁴. Siak Regency was an interesting choice for this research because of its unique dynamics in the context of violence against

⁴ Hans-Peter Blossfeld and Kathleen Kiernan, *The New Role of Women: Family Formation in Modern Societies* (Routledge, 2019).

⁵ M Quraish Shihab, “*Membumikan*” *Al-Quran: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* (Mizan Pustaka, 2007).

⁶ Catherine Parssinen, “The Changing Role of Women,” in *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia* (Routledge, 2019), 145–70.

⁷ Annabel Rodda, *Women and the Environment*. (Zed Books Ltd., 1991); T Alawiyah, “Perempuan Dan Masyarakat Pembelajaran,” ed. Legasi (Jakarta: Jakarta: Legasi, 2022).

⁸ T Alawiyah, *Perempuan Dan Masyarakat Pembelajaran* (Jakarta: Legasi, 2022).

⁹ Josephine M Kiamba, “Women and Leadership Positions: Social and Cultural Barriers to Success,” *Wagadu Volume 6 Journal of International Women’s Studies Volume 10: 1*, 2009, 89.

¹⁰ Ben Hillman, “The Limits of Gender Quotas: Women’s Parliamentary Representation in Indonesia,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 2 (2018): 322–38.

¹¹ Novia Puspa Ayu Larasati, “Gender Inequality in Indonesia: Facts and Legal Analysis,” *Law Research Review Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (2021): 445–58.

¹² Elizabeth Kristi Poerwandari, Ratna Batara Munti, and Jackie Viemilawati, “Pro-Women’s Policy Advocacy Movements in Indonesia: Struggles and Reflections,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 24, no. 4 (2018): 489–509.

¹³ Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, “The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community,” *Class: The Anthology*, 2017, 79–86.

¹⁴ Alawiyah, *Perempuan Dan Masyarakat Pembelajaran*, 2022.

women in villages. As highlighted by Firdaus¹⁵, women in rural areas tend to be more vulnerable to various forms of violence and discrimination, because there is an inherent idea that men are superior. In addition, strong cultural perceptions among village women bind them in an unbreakable attachment to the patriarchal norms that govern their daily lives¹⁶. Although culture like this can be a good guide, in some cases, the power of patriarchal culture can be used by men to exploit and oppress women. Siak District, with its characteristics, offers a strong foundation for understanding how culture and social structure influence women's participation and empowerment at the local level.

Firdaus and Rani¹⁷ raised the theme of Women's Empowerment to Prevent Domestic Violence Based on the Law of the Kingdom of Siak Sri Indra Pura. The results of this research underline the importance of local wisdom in tackling domestic violence. In the context of Siak Regency, the local wisdom of the Siak Sri Indra Pura Kingdom has a significant role in forming strategies for preventing domestic violence¹⁸. The fact that Siak District is also one of the districts in Riau Province with the highest rates of domestic violence is an important basis for exploring more deeply how local policies and practices can be effective solutions in protecting and empowering women.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the social and cultural environment also plays an important role in shaping paradigms related to the role of women in local government¹⁹. There are social norms that still limit the role of women in the public sphere, and this often becomes an obstacle in efforts to increase women's participation in local government structures²⁰. Thus, this study will delve deeper into the social and cultural factors that influence women's participation in the Village Consultative Body in Siak, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers women face in gaining an equal role in local governance.

¹⁵ Emilda Firdaus, "Bentuk Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Hak Asasi Manusia," *Jurnal Konstitusi* 1, no. 01 (2008).

¹⁶ Bettina B Bock, "Gender Mainstreaming and Rural Development Policy; the Trivialisation of Rural Gender Issues," *Gender, Place & Culture* 22, no. 5 (2015): 731–45.

¹⁷ Moh Hakim and Riza Taufiqul, "Efektifitas Penegakan Hukum Undang-Undang No 23 Tahun 2004 Tentang Penghapusan Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19 (Studi Kasus Di Kabupaten Ponorogo)" (IAIN Ponorogo, 2023).

¹⁸ Hakim and Taufiqul.

¹⁹ Andrea Cornwall, "Women's Empowerment: What Works?," *Journal of International Development* 28, no. 3 (2016): 342–59.

²⁰ Alawiyah, *Perempuan Dan Masyarakat Pembelajaran*, 2022.

In this regard, this study aims to further explore the role of women in the Village Consultative Body in Siak as an effort to increase their participation in village community empowerment. Through a sociological legal research approach and data collection from various sources, including primary, secondary, and tertiary data, this research hopes to provide in-depth insights into the role of women in these bodies. By gaining a better understanding of the contribution of women in the Village Consultative Body, it is hoped that this research can provide valuable input to improve women's participation in empowering village communities in Siak.

For this reason, this research is expected to make a valuable contribution to broadening the understanding of the role of women in local governance structures and highlighting the challenges and opportunities women face in striving for equality and participation in development processes at the local level.

Theory of Equality Before the Law: Democracy and Equality for Women

The theory of *Equality before the Law* is a legal concept that emphasizes the importance of equality and justice in the legal treatment of all individuals, regardless of their social, economic or political status. In short, the theory has a principle of providing access to justice to all people, regardless of individual backgrounds²¹. This theory emphasizes that legal power must be exercised fairly as well as transparently, without discrimination or favoritism towards certain parties²².

According to Acemoglu and Wolitzky²³, the application of the concept of "*Quality before the Law*" has broad implications in judicial and governance systems. First of all, it underlines the importance of the independence and integrity of the judicial system in ensuring that the law is enforced fairly for all individuals, without any external interference affecting legal decisions²⁴. In addition, this theory encourages addressing inequalities in access to justice, both in terms of resources and treatment in the courts, thereby ensuring that all

²¹ William Lucy, "Equality under and before the Law," *University of Toronto Law Journal* 61, no. 3 (2011): 411–65.

²² Riza Nizarli, *Hukum Acara Pidana*, (Banda Aceh: CV Bina Nanggroe, 2012).

²³ Daron Acemoglu and Alexander Wolitzky, "A Theory of Equality before the Law," *The Economic Journal* 131, no. 636 (2021): 1429–65.

²⁴ Acemoglu and Wolitzky.

individuals have equal opportunities to obtain legal protection as well as enforcement of their rights²⁵.

The principle of equality before the law is based on the recognition of individual freedom. Thomas Jefferson in this context stated that "all men are created equal," especially in terms of human rights protection²⁶. The concept of equality before the law is officially recognized in the constitution as the highest foundation in the legal system, as stated in Article 27 paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution which states that "*all citizens have equal standing before the law and government, and shall respect the law and government without exception*"²⁷.

In the context of this research, which focuses on women's participation in local government empowerment, the theory of "Equality before the Law" holds significant relevance, particularly in the context of gender equality. This theory asserts that women and men should be treated fairly and equally under the law, without discrimination or inequality in access to opportunities and justice²⁸. The application of this theory can manifest in several aspects. As maintained by Ford, in the analysis of women's political participation and empowerment at the local level, this theory emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all women have equal access to the political decision-making process, both as voters and as leaders²⁹. This entails addressing and overcoming barriers that women may face in actively participating in local politics, such as access to resources, education, information, and social support.

Moreover, in the context of implementing empowerment programs such as the Village Consultative Body (*Badan Permusyawaratan Kampung*, hereinafter as BAPEKAM), the theory of *Equality before the Law* demands that these programs be designed and executed inclusively and responsively to the needs and aspirations of all citizens, including women. This includes ensuring that these programs not only provide opportunities for active participation of women in local development processes but also accommodate gender perspectives in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs.

²⁵ Acemoglu and Wolitzky.

²⁶ Teguh Prasetyo, *Hukum Pidana*, (Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 2011).

²⁷ Nadya Thamariskha Nadya Thamariskha, "Penerapan Asas Persamaan Dihadapan Hukum (Equality Before The Law) Terhadap Pelaku Tindak Pidana Umum Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) di Wilayah Hukum Polres Sarolangun" (Universitas Batanghari, 2022).

²⁸ Nuria Elena Ramos Martin, "Positive Action in EU Gender Equality Law: Promoting Women in Corporate Decision-Making Positions," *Spanish Labour Law and Employment Relations Journal* 3, no. 1–2 (2014): 20–33.

²⁹ Lynne Ford, *Women and Politics: The Pursuit of Equality* (London: Routledge, 2018).

Lastly, the theory of *Equality before the Law* strengthens the argument for fair and transparent law enforcement in cases of women's rights violations or gender inequality at the local level³⁰. This necessitates an independent and effective judicial system to handle cases of gender-based violence, discrimination, or other violations of women's rights, providing equal protection for all individuals regardless of gender or social status.

In practice, the implementation of the theory of Equality before the Law often involves legal as well as policy reforms to ensure that legal rules not only apply in theory but are also consistently and fairly enforced throughout society. As a result, this theory plays a crucial role in strengthening public trust in the judicial system, promoting principles of justice in democratic societies, and advocating for the adoption of policies and practices that support the rights and aspirations of women, particularly in this context, in Siak, Riau Province.

Community Empowerment (ACTORS) Theory

The ACTORS theory of empowerment, proposed by Cook and Macaulay in 1997, is a thorough framework for comprehending and advancing the processes of individual and community empowerment³¹. The word ACTORS itself is an acronym for *Access, Capacity, Time, Opportunities, Resources, and Support*. This approach recognizes that empowerment is a multifaceted process including several interconnected elements that interact and have an impact on one another.

To begin with, Access serves as the starting point in this theory. Access refers to the ability of a person or group to get the data, resources, and services required to meet particular objectives³². To reduce inequities and improve chances for individuals and groups, fair and equitable access to healthcare, education, employment, and decision-making is essential in the context of empowerment.

Secondly, this theory heavily relies on Capacity, which refers to the ability of people or groups to acquire the abilities, knowledge, and experience required to take the essential steps to attain empowerment³³. This covers instruction,

³⁰ Acemoglu and Wolitzky, "A Theory of Equality before the Law."

³¹ Sarah Cook and Steve Macaulay, *Perfect Empowerment*, Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 1997.

³² Macaulay and Cook.

³³ Macaulay and Cook.

both official and informal, training, and the acquisition of social and technical skills appropriate to the community.

The next crucial factor in the empowerment process is Time. Time is the means by which people or groups can participate in activities that foster independence and personal development. Sustainable participation in busy, fast-paced cultures requires careful consideration of how best to allocate time and flexibility when planning empowerment programs.

Additionally, this theory also centers on Opportunities. Opportunities are circumstances or settings that allow people or groups to take the required actions to enhance their quality of life³⁴. Opportunities for employment, involvement in decision-making, and access to markets and other resources that promote social and economic advancement are all examples of this.

This approach also emphasizes the importance of Resources. All assets, both material and immaterial, that people or groups can use to attain empowerment are referred to as resources³⁵. This includes monetary resources, physical facilities, social media platforms, and availability of pertinent data and technology.

At long last, Support is a key component in helping the empowering process. Numerous people can offer support, including friends, family, the community, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. This support might be in the form of the technical, financial, emotional, or moral assistance required to enable people or groups to achieve their objectives.

As a whole, the ACTORS theory of empowerment emphasizes how crucial it is to take into account a variety of interconnected elements when working to support the empowerment of people and communities. By understanding and addressing elements such as access, capacity, time, opportunity, resources, and support, we can create an environment that supports the growth, self-reliance, and active participation of all members of society in processes of sustainable and inclusive development.

Furthermore, according to Cépeda et al³⁶, this framework facilitates community empowerment through several important aspects, including giving community groups the authority to change their stance, encouraging self-confidence and the ability to change things, fostering the belief that they have the potential to change, providing opportunities for people to choose according

³⁴ Macaulay and Cook.

³⁵ Macaulay and Cook.

³⁶ Paola Cépeda et al., "Gender Bias in Linguistics Textbooks: Has Anything Changed since Macaulay & Brice 1997?," *Language* 97, no. 4 (2021): 678–702.

to their potential, as well as ensuring support from various parties including government, community, and business.

In the context of applying this theory, the government has a central role in facilitating community empowerment, especially in exploring, mobilizing, and combining existing resources, providing guidance and technical assistance, and fostering community organizations to increase development success³⁷.

In connection with this research endeavor, the ACTORS theory of empowerment can offer a deep understanding of the variables impacting women's involvement in the local government. First and foremost, it becomes clear that understanding the extent of women's participation in BAPEKAM and local politics in general requires an understanding of access. Ensuring women have equitable access to information, training, and resources is crucial in enabling them to participate actively in village or community decision-making processes.

Another important factor to take into account while analyzing women's participation in BAPEKAM is capacity. Women's ability to actively participate in BAPEKAM activities and local governance can be improved by increasing their capacity through education, training, and skill development. Through improving their knowledge and abilities, women will be more prepared to participate actively and have an impact on decision-making processes.

In addition, time and opportunities also need to be considered in the context of women's participation in local governance and BAPEKAM. Making sure that women have enough time and opportunities to participate in BAPEKAM events and hold important positions with regard to decision-making is necessary. Broader and more long-lasting female participation at the level of municipal governments can be fostered by providing equal and inclusive opportunities for participation in decision-making processes.

Additionally, resources also serve as a crucial factor influencing women's participation in local governance and BAPEKAM. This entails making certain that women have sufficient access to the financial, material, and technical support they require to fulfill their duties and make contributions to local governance. If they have access to enough resources, women will be better able to influence policies and initiatives at the village or community level.

At last, social and moral support from others, including family, community, and government institutions, can also greatly aid the facilitation of women's participation in local governance and BAPEKAM. This support can

³⁷ Kartjuni Dt Maani, "Teori ACTORS Dalam Pemberdayaan Masyarakat," *Jurnal Demokrasi* 10, no. 1 (2011).

provide additional encouragement and motivation for women to actively engage in decision-making processes as well as provide confidence and validity for their contributions to local governance.

By incorporating the ACTORS theory of empowerment, we can gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing women's participation in local governance and BAPEKAM and formulate more effective policy recommendations to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of local governance.

The Village Consultative Body (BAPEKAM) in Promoting Democracy

BAPEKAM, short for the Village Consultative Body in English, is an institution that plays a crucial role in the context of village governance in Indonesia. By definition, BAPEKAM serves as a forum for deliberation and consultation at the village level, aiming to facilitate active participation of residents in decision-making processes related to village development as well as governance³⁸. The institution serves as a platform for villagers to voice their aspirations and needs to the village government and also plays a role in formulating and evaluating development policies at the village level.

The primary tasks of BAPEKAM encompass several key responsibilities. They are responsible for gathering aspirations and inputs from the village community regarding development needs and public services³⁹. This includes drafting village development plans and planning the implementation of various programs. Also, BAPEKAM facilitates dialogue between the village government and the community to ensure that proposed policies and programs reflect the real needs of the community and coordinates various social, economic, and cultural activities at the village level⁴⁰.

The function of BAPEKAM in village governance is highly significant. They serve as the direct representation of the community in the decision-

³⁸ Rizan Hasbullah, Febri Yuliani, and Hasim As' ari, "Ambiguity and Conflict in the Implementation of Policies for Determining Traditional Villages in Siak Regency," *Publica: Jurnal Pemikiran Administrasi Negara* 14, no. 2 (2022): 180–88.

³⁹ Dhea Fitriana, "Penyelenggaraan Fungsi Badan Permusyawaratan Kampung (BAPEKAM) Di Kampung Rantau Bertuah Kecamatan Minas Kabupaten Siak" (Universitas Islam Riau, 2022).

⁴⁰ Maani, "Teori ACTORS Dalam Pemberdayaan Masyarakat."

making process at the village level⁴¹. By representing various groups and interests within the village community, BAPEKAM ensures that decisions made by the village government reflect the interests and aspirations of the community as a whole. Additionally, BAPEKAM functions as a mechanism of social control over the village government, ensuring accountability and transparency in the implementation of village policies and programs.

Lastly, in the context of sustainable village development, BAPEKAM plays a strategic role in building the capacity and self-reliance of the village community⁴². They can provide training and assistance to villagers to enhance their understanding of their rights and obligations as well as the skills needed to actively participate in village development. For this reason, BAPEKAM serves not only as a link between the village government and the community but also as a crucial instrument in strengthening inclusive, participatory, and sustainable village governance.

In the context of village governance institutions, in addition to the Village Government led by the Village Head/Head of Village, there is a Village Consultative Body or Village Consultative Body (*Badan Pemusyawaratan Kampung*) that plays an important role in accommodating the aspirations of the community. Based on Article 3 of Siak District Regulation Number 17 of 2018 regarding the Village Consultative Body, the functions of the Village Consultative Body are, firstly, the collaborative endeavor to discuss and endorse the Draft Village Regulations as well as Village Regulations alongside the Village Head, fostering an inclusive approach to governance. Moreover, the Body acts as a conduit for the aspirations of the villagers, providing a platform for expression and advocacy. Additionally, it assumes the critical responsibility of evaluating the performance of the Village Head to ensure accountability and efficiency in administrative affairs. Conversely, Article 4 articulates the specific tasks and authorities bestowed upon the Village Consultative Body, delineating a meticulous framework for its operations. These include the rigorous examination of draft Village Regulations in tandem with the Village Head, alongside the vigilant supervision of their implementation.

Furthermore, the Body is entrusted with pivotal decisions such as proposing the appointment and dismissal of the Village Head and spearheading the formation of committees for the election process. Its mandate extends to the facilitation of community engagement, including the solicitation, formulation, and transmission of collective aspirations. With the power to enact changes to

⁴¹ Hasbullah, Yuliani, and As' ari, "Ambiguity and Conflict in the Implementation of Policies for Determining Traditional Villages in Siak Regency."

⁴² Maani, "Teori ACTORS Dalam Pemberdayaan Masyarakat."

Village Regulations and establish operational guidelines, the Body emerges as a cornerstone of local governance, tasked with determining the most suitable candidates for the position of Village Head. Through these delineated functions and authorities, the Village Consultative Body emerges as a pivotal institution, poised to foster participatory democracy and community empowerment within the vibrant tapestry of Siak's village life.

The Role of Women in Local Government

The division of roles between men and women in Indonesian society is generally reflected in the tasks assigned to women⁴³. As stated by Casinowsky, the traditional basis of the division of labor between men and women is generally related to their reproductive roles, where women are often responsible for domestic work and family maintenance⁴⁴. Indah identifies several roles of women that can be analyzed from the perspective of their position in indirect productive (domestic) and direct productive (public) affairs.

Firstly, in traditional societies, women have historically been allocated tasks mostly in the home⁴⁵. The duties associated with these traditional roles include running the home, bearing and raising children, and taking care of their husbands. This division of labor results in clear-cut roles where women are expected to handle domestic responsibilities while men are expected to work outside the home⁴⁶. Gender dynamics within communities are shaped by these

⁴³ Michaela Haug, "Men, Women, and Environmental Change in Indonesia: The Gendered Face of Development among the Dayak Benuaq," *Advances in Southeast Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017): 29–46.

⁴⁴ Gunilla Bergström Casinowsky, "Working Life on the Move, Domestic Life at Standstill? Work-related Travel and Responsibility for Home and Family," *Gender, Work & Organization* 20, no. 3 (2013): 311–26.

⁴⁵ Haug, "Men, Women, and Environmental Change in Indonesia: The Gendered Face of Development among the Dayak Benuaq."

⁴⁶ Anne-Rigt Poortman and Tanja Van Der Lippe, "Attitudes toward Housework and Child Care and the Gendered Division of Labor," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71, no. 3 (2009): 526–41.

conventional roles, which are strongly embedded in community norms and cultural expectations.

Within the traditional framework, women's roles are often focused on taking care of others and running the home⁴⁷. They are responsible for making sure the family runs well, which includes taking care of the money, cooking, cleaning, and providing emotional support to family members. These responsibilities, which reflect deeply ingrained gender stereotypes regarding women's nurturing and caregiving capacities, are considered as crucial to maintaining family harmony and stability.

However, as civilizations change, there is a steady movement toward more equal responsibilities for women. Even if conventional responsibilities continue to be prioritized, women's abilities outside of the home are becoming more widely acknowledged⁴⁸. This transitional phase is marked by shifting cultural perceptions of women's roles and changing gender goals. Task allocation is still influenced by gender conventions, but women's empowerment and engagement in wider societal domains are becoming increasingly recognized.

Despite these shifts, women continue to shoulder the primary responsibility for household affairs in many transitional contexts. In order to preserve family unity, women frequently continue to play the major caring role, even though desires for gender equality may have an impact on how responsibilities are divided⁴⁹. This transitional stage highlights the need for cultural change and governmental actions to support more equitable gender roles by reflecting the complicated interaction between traditional beliefs and increasing aspirations for gender equality.

On the other hand, in contemporary society, women are adopting more varied responsibilities and giving equal weight to their participation in the home and public spheres. This dual position acknowledges women's contributions to managing the home and participating in larger society⁵⁰. In this case, husbands' moral support becomes an essential trigger for keeping things in balance because any out of balance can cause friction or conflict in marriages. Women who play

⁴⁷ Haug, "Men, Women, and Environmental Change in Indonesia: The Gendered Face of Development among the Dayak Benuaq."

⁴⁸ Carol Emslie and Kate Hunt, "Live to Work'or 'Work to Live'? A Qualitative Study of Gender and Work–Life Balance among Men and Women in Mid-life," *Gender, Work & Organization* 16, no. 1 (2009): 151–72.

⁴⁹ Haug, "Men, Women, and Environmental Change in Indonesia: The Gendered Face of Development among the Dayak Benuaq."

⁵⁰ Ana Maria Ventura et al., "Women's Empowerment, Research, and Management: Their Contribution to Social Sustainability," *Sustainability* 13, no. 22 (2021): 12754.

several jobs frequently manage complicated commitments, balancing work-related responsibilities with volunteer work or home chores. They contribute to the social and economic fabric of society and are crucial in determining the dynamics of family life⁵¹.

Moving towards more egalitarian roles, women are actively involved in activities outside the home with significant moral support and attention from men. In order to prevent conflicts and uneven role allocation within the family, an egalitarian balance is necessary^{52,53}. Without it, family life may become uncomfortable and tense. In roles that are egalitarian, both couples share responsibilities and decide together on things like childcare, job goals, and home problems. Greater peace and happiness in family life are promoted by this cooperative approach, which encourages respect for one another, communication, and cooperation within relationships.

In the context of contemporary gender dynamics, some women choose to pursue financial and emotional independence⁵⁴. Even if they now don't represent a large percentage, more women will probably fill this position in the future due to constant pressure to oppose the dominance of men and treat women's interests with equal consideration. Modern-day women prioritize autonomy and self-determination, balancing cultural expectations and gender conventions with the pursuit of their personal as well as professional goals⁵⁵. They challenge conventional ideas about women's roles and open the door for more inclusivity and variety in all areas of life. To put it simply, they push for gender equality and empowerment.

In the context of the evolution of women's roles, from traditional roles to contemporary roles, significant changes can be observed in their contributions and participation in various aspects of life. From typical domestic responsibilities to active involvement in the public sphere, women demonstrate flexibility and resilience in navigating dual and egalitarian roles. Moreover, the trend towards contemporary roles signifies a stronger push for women's financial and emotional autonomy. In spite of that, challenges persist in

⁵¹ Mandy Boehnke, "Gender Role Attitudes around the Globe: Egalitarian vs. Traditional Views," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 39, no. 1 (2011): 57–74.

⁵² Michael Braun, "Using Egalitarian Items to Measure Men's and Women's Family Roles," *Sex Roles* 59, no. 9 (2008): 644–56.

⁵³ Boehnke, "Gender Role Attitudes around the Globe: Egalitarian vs. Traditional Views."

⁵⁴ Cynthia F Epstein, *Woman's Place: Options and Limits in Professional Careers* (Univ of California Press, 2022).

⁵⁵ Emslie and Hunt, "'Live to Work' or 'Work to Live'? A Qualitative Study of Gender and Work–Life Balance among Men and Women in Mid-life."

addressing imbalances in the distribution of domestic tasks, moral support, and the adjustment of still-strong gender norms. On that account, understanding and recognition of these diverse roles are crucial in ensuring the inclusion, equality, and empowerment of women in modern society.

The strengthening of women's roles globally is reflected in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, adopted by 189 UN member states, including Indonesia, at the UN High-Level Conference in September 2000. The MDGs are based on the fulfillment of human rights and consist of eight main interconnected goals, as explained by Indah⁵⁶, namely:

- a. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- b. Achieve universal primary education
- c. Promote gender equality and empower women
- d. Reduce child mortality
- e. Improve maternal health
- f. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- g. Ensure environmental sustainability
- h. Develop a global partnership for development.

Through these goals, the MDGs provide a strong foundation for enhancing the role of women and gender equality around the world. One of the main focuses of the MDGs is promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, which emphasizes the important role of women in social, economic and political development. As such, this women's empowerment agenda is important in the context of global efforts to achieve inclusive progress and prosperity.

The Significance of Women in Politics

Women's participation in local government is of paramount importance, especially in fostering effective governance and sustainable development⁵⁷. Kumar stated that women's participation brings unique perspectives that enrich decision-making processes. Based on the theory of representation, diversity among leaders and decision-makers leads to more inclusive policies that are responsive to the needs of the entire community, including women. The presence of women in decision-making forums ensures that issues crucial to

⁵⁶ Indah Indah, "Peran-Peran Perempuan Dalam Masyarakat," *Academica* 5, no. 2 (2013).

⁵⁷ Ana Langer et al., "Women and Health: The Key for Sustainable Development," *The Lancet* 386, no. 9999 (2015): 1165–1210.

women, such as reproductive health, education, and protection against violence, receive due attention⁵⁸.

Furthermore, women's participation in local government fosters more transparent and accountable governance⁵⁹. According to democratic theory, active participation of women in decision-making processes enhances government legitimacy and reduces the risk of corruption⁶⁰. This is because women often tend to pay more attention to social needs and community welfare, which can strengthen oversight and accountability mechanisms within governance⁶¹. Therefore, it is not surprising that research indicates that the presence of women in policy positions can result in more holistic and sustainable policies, considering the long-term impacts on society and the environment⁶².

Above all these reasons, women's participation in local government is a prerequisite for broader gender equality and the fulfillment of human rights⁶³. Based on feminist theory, women's participation in political decision-making is a key step towards greater gender equality in society. By empowering women to participate in decision-making processes, local governments can create an inclusive and fair environment for all citizens.

However, despite women's representation in local government being higher than in parliament, it still falls short of that of men according to a global analysis by UN Women⁶⁴. This under-representation of women in decision-making processes can result in a democratic deficit and hinders the prioritization of women's practical needs and issues on the local government's agenda. There are a number of reasons why women are underrepresented in the local government. These include the culture of formal political structures,

⁵⁸ Jacqui True, "The Political Economy of Violence against Women: A Feminist International Relations Perspective," *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 32, no. 1 (2010): 39–59.

⁵⁹ Zungura Mervis et al., "The Relationship between Democracy and Women Participation in Politics," *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 3, no. 1 (2013): 168–76.

⁶⁰ Ortrun Merkle, "Anti-Corruption and Gender: The Role of Women's Political Participation," *WFD Anti-Corruption and Integrity Series* 4 (2022).

⁶¹ Virginia Sapiro, "The Gender Basis of American Social Policy," in *Welfare Law* (Routledge, 2020), 545–62.

⁶² Poortman and Van Der Lippe, "Attitudes toward Housework and Child Care and the Gendered Division of Labor."

⁶³ Paloma Duran y Lalaguna and Ekaterina Dorodnykh, "Gender Equality and Sustainable Development," *Asian Development Perspectives (ADP)* 9, no. 1 (2018): 1–11.

⁶⁴ U N Women, "Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis," *Hämtad* 27 (2021): 2001–22.

political parties, male dominance, patriarchy, and social and political relationships within a particular civilization⁶⁵. In addition, women frequently encounter obstacles such as multiple demands on their time for social and domestic tasks, lack of confidence to run in elections, perception of politics as a dirty game, lack of funds and resources, and limited access to education⁶⁶.

Women's political engagement may also be impacted by the implementation of statutory gender quotas and different election methods in local elections. Studies have demonstrated, for instance, that the makeup of local government budgets and the presence of female mayors can have an impact on public policies and services⁶⁷. Thus, gender-balanced local councils may be an important step in helping to achieve gender balance at the national levels.

Addressing these challenges and enhancing women's involvement in local politics requires prioritizing strategies aimed at increasing the number of female candidates, assisting locally elected women in advancing to leadership roles at the national level, and actively engaging women in local decision-making, planning, and administration. In addition, political parties have a responsibility to promote women's involvement in regional politics. In summary, the active participation of women in local governance is vital for efficient administration and sustainable progress⁶⁸. We can get one step closer to attaining gender equality and empowering women at the grassroots level by addressing the obstacles preventing women from participating actively in local politics and implementing policies to encourage such participation.

The Historical Context of Women Participation in Siak Government

The history of women's participation in local government in Siak, Riau Province, has deep roots and reflects a long journey towards gender equality in governance. Within local traditions, there are records indicating regulations and norms governing the roles and participation of women in governance, such as

⁶⁵ Ithemeje Godwin, "The Need for Participation of Women in Local Governance: A Nigerian Discourse," *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies* 5, no. 4 (2013): 59–66.

⁶⁶ Emslie and Hunt, "‘Live to Work’ or ‘Work to Live’? A Qualitative Study of Gender and Work–Life Balance among Men and Women in Mid-life."

⁶⁷ Epstein, *Woman's Place: Options and Limits in Professional Careers*.

⁶⁸ Poortman and Van Der Lippe, "Attitudes toward Housework and Child Care and the Gendered Division of Labor."

those found in classical Islamic law books like *Al-Qawaid* or *Baabul al Qawaid*. *Baabul al Qawaid* is a legal book serving as the legal framework for the Sultanate of Siak. This term means *Door of All Rules*, essentially serving as the constitution for the Siak Sri Indrapura kingdom⁶⁹.

The rich local traditions and Malay culture have significantly influenced the role of women in Siak's local government. Women often hold important roles in customary society, such as managing households, providing advice to leaders, and participating in social and religious activities. Although not directly involved in formal government structures, women have a strong influence on decision-making at the village or community level.

During the reign of the Sultanate of Siak before the Dutch colonial period, the influence of women was mainly seen within the Sultanate's household sphere⁷⁰. Queens or princesses of the Sultanate sometimes had significant political influence and could influence the policies adopted by rulers. However, formal recognition of women's political participation or formal governance was limited in historical records.

With political and social developments, especially after Indonesia's independence, awareness of the importance of women's participation in local government has increased. Various women's movements and government initiatives have been undertaken to enhance women's involvement in political decision-making and governance⁷¹. Nevertheless, challenges remain in overcoming gender stereotypes, unequal access to resources, and cultural constraints that hinder active participation of women in local government.

Thus, the history of women's participation in local government in Siak, Riau Province, reflects the struggle towards gender equality and inclusion in governance. While local traditions and Malay culture provide a strong foundation for women's roles in society, modern challenges require sustained efforts to expand women's participation in political decision-making and sustainable development.

There have been several notable achievements and difficulties in the past when it comes to women's involvement in governance in Siak, Riau Province. Unlike the 2020 Pilkada in Riau Province, where women won and filled the

⁶⁹ Ahmad Supandi, "Kesultanan Siak Sri Indra Pura: Islam Dan Perlawanan Terhadap Kolonialisme Pada Tahun 1706-1946 M," n.d.

⁷⁰ Ion Fahrian, Ridwan Melay, and Marwoto Saiman, "Bab Al-Qawa'id: Kesultanan Siak Dibawah Pemerintahan Sultan Sultan Syarif Hasyim Abdul Jalil Syarifuddin 1889-1908" (Riau University, n.d.).

⁷¹ Indah, "Peran-Peran Perempuan Dalam Masyarakat."

positions in Bengkalis Regency and Indragiri Hulu Regency, there was never a woman sitting as regent or deputy regent in Siak Regency prior to 1999⁷².

Owing to this, the Siak Regency Government has launched a number of programs that aim to increase the involvement of women in politics. The Forest Transfer Policy is one of the noteworthy efforts that has affected the representation of women. The local government launched the policy with the intention of encouraging women to participate in the formulation of public policy⁷³. Purnomo et al did a qualitative research study which yielded findings indicating that there was low involvement of women in the policy-making process⁷⁴. The Community and Village Empowerment Service of Siak Regency is an additional endeavor that endeavors to empower women and encourage their participation in local governance. The KODE Initiative on Prolegnas 2020–2024 study, however, demonstrated that women's weak bargaining position and legislative direction are inextricably linked to their inability to advocate for gender concerns in public policy⁷⁵.

In order to tackle these issues, the Siak Regency Government had to prioritize the execution of gender-sensitive governance changes, improving the proportion of females occupying decision-making roles, and endorsing gender-sensitive policies and initiatives.

The Role of Women in BAPEKAM

In the current era of democracy, the government provides broad opportunities for women to take part in decision-making positions, both in government and society⁷⁶. However, the utilization of these opportunities has not been optimal due to psychological, cultural, and political obstacles that

⁷² Muhammad Ihsan Kabullah, Wewen Kusumi Rahayu, and Rifki Dermawan, "Women's Representation on Forest Transfer Policy in Siak Regency," in *ICGCS 2021: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Gender, Culture and Society, ICGCS 2021, 30-31 August 2021, Padang, Indonesia* (European Alliance for Innovation, 2022), 111.

⁷³ True, "The Political Economy of Violence against Women: A Feminist International Relations Perspective."

⁷⁴ Eko Priyo Purnomo et al., *Collaborative Governance dalam Tata Kelola Hutan Berbasis Masyarakat* (Lembaga Penelitian, Publikasi, dan Pengabdian Masyarakat, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 2018).

⁷⁵ True, "The Political Economy of Violence against Women: A Feminist International Relations Perspective."

⁷⁶ Elisabeth Porter, "Women, Political Decision-Making, and Peace-Building," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 15, no. 3 (2003): 245–62.

hinder women's progress⁷⁷. Especially for those who want to become village heads or community representatives at the rural level, adequate modalities are needed, including intellectual capacity, adequate social and economic capital, and political support from the local community⁷⁸.

Based on the previous information, the Village Consultative Body (BAPEKAM) needs to involve all levels of society in decision-making, including actively involving women in the decision-making process⁷⁹. The role of women is not only limited to providing advice and information, but also in determining the direction of policies that are equal to the role of men. In the midst of a strong patriarchal culture, women often experience economic and social oppression⁸⁰.

The role of women needs to be encouraged from the beginning of the development planning process in a region⁸¹, so that they can be actively involved in various activities and programs that encourage the growth of democracy based on the protection and respect for women's rights in the economic, political and educational fields⁸². This will ensure that guarantees and recognition of women's rights are realized in a democratic state order and adhere to the principles of human rights⁸³. Women play an important role in fighting for development rights, with the Village Consultative Body acting as a party closer to the community, so it is expected to be better able to absorb aspirations and implement development programs, community development, and community empowerment in the village.

The role of women in the Village Consultative Body in Siak is reflected when the members of the Village Consultative Body join the institution.

⁷⁷ Nur Inna Alfiah and Dwi Listia Rika Tini, "The Role of Women Village Heads in Decision Making Process in Lembung Timur Village," *Journal of Local Government Issues (LOGOS)* 4, no. 2 (2021): 90–105.

⁷⁸ Christina Geoffrey Mandara, Anke Niehof, and Hilje Van Der Horst, "Women and Rural Water Management: Token Representatives or Paving the Way to Power?," *Water Alternatives* 10, no. 1 (2017): 116–33.

⁷⁹ Hasbullah, Yuliani, and As' ari, "Ambiguity and Conflict in the Implementation of Policies for Determining Traditional Villages in Siak Regency."

⁸⁰ Alfiah and Tini, "The Role of Women Village Heads in Decision Making Process in Lembung Timur Village."

⁸¹ Caroline Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training* (Routledge, 2012).

⁸² Ester Boserup et al., *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (Routledge, 2013).

⁸³ Valentine M Moghadam and Lucie Senftova, "Measuring Women's Empowerment: Participation and Rights in Civil, Political, Social, Economic, and Cultural Domains," *International Social Science Journal* 57, no. 184 (2005): 389–412.

However, the lack of understanding of joint tasks and functions within the institution makes it difficult for female members of the Village Consultative Body to advocate for stronger female participation. It is hoped that women representing the community in the Village Consultative Body can actively supervise the development process in the village, from planning to implementation, and effectively take responsibility. The existence of women in the Village Consultative Body is expected to motivate other women to participate in overseeing development in the village.

Women themselves have been involved in movements against injustice⁸⁴, particularly in the struggle to gain rights equal to those held by men, manifested in the feminist movement⁸⁵. This movement believes that women are disadvantaged because of their gender, and this situation can and should be overcome⁸⁶. In this perspective, feminists highlight gender differences as a political tool that benefits men in participating in public policies, while suppressing the role of women in public policies⁸⁷.

The involvement of women in decision-making has been clarified in Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, especially in Article 58 paragraph 1, which is further explained in the Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 110 of 2016 concerning the Village Consultative Body (BPD). The purpose of this regulation is to provide legal certainty for the BPD as an institution in the village that is responsible for the functions of village governance. However, the strong patriarchal culture in society often grants more rights to men in terms of expressing opinions and participating in politics⁸⁸, while women are often seen as creatures confined to the private sphere and lacking equal rights⁸⁹. This limits

⁸⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, *Women in Movement (Routledge Revivals): Feminism and Social Action* (Routledge, 2013).

⁸⁵ Sheila Tobias, *Faces of Feminism: An Activist's Reflections on the Women's Movement* (Routledge, 2018).

⁸⁶ Abeda Sultana, "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis," *Arts Faculty Journal* 4 (2012): 1–18.

⁸⁷ María Bustelo, "Three Decades of State Feminism and Gender Equality Policies in Multi-Governed Spain," *Sex Roles* 74 (2016): 107–20.

⁸⁸ Marta Fraile, "Do Women Know Less about Politics than Men? The Gender Gap in Political Knowledge in Europe," *Social Politics* 21, no. 2 (2014): 261–89.

⁸⁹ Pankaj Kumar, "Participation of Women in Politics: Worldwide Experience," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 12, no. 77–88 (2017), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3399829>.

women's participation in politics and decision-making, due to the strong influence of the patriarchal culture that still exists^{90,91}.

In response to the role of women at the village level, the regulations in Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages emphasize the principles of participation, equality, and empowerment. These three principles form the basis of inclusive village development, accommodating the value of gender equality through women's participation and empowerment. Article 26 paragraph 1 and Article 63 emphasize the gender-fair village governance, while Article 58 paragraph 1 considers the composition of members of the Village Consultative Body as a reflection of democratization efforts in the village that take gender factors into account.

The involvement of women in policy-making and politics is crucial to achieve balance in representing the aspirations of the community, so that all segments of society can feel adequately represented⁹². Currently, the level of education among women is no less than that of men, with many of them able to pursue education up to the university level. Hence, the quality of women in policy-making should be on par with men, as mandated in the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. For this reason, women's participation is crucial to ensure a balance of aspirations in the policy-making process that serves the needs of the entire community.

The process of policy-making and politics at the village community level can be initiated through the active participation of women in the village area, especially through their representation in the Village Consultative Body (BAPEKAM). Each BAPEKAM is expected to have at least one female representative, providing an opportunity for women to provide input and aspirations to the Village Government in accordance with the functions of the BAPEKAM, such as the drafting of village regulations, the collection of village community aspirations, and supervision of the performance of the Village/Kampung Government. The role of women in the members of the BAPEKAM is crucial to carry out these functions to the best of their ability.

⁹⁰ Endale Alemu Hora, "Factors That Affect Women Participation in Leadership and Decision Making Position," *Asian Journal of Humanity, Art and Literature* 1, no. 2 (2014).

⁹¹ Krisna Yuda I Wayan and Subanda Nyoman, "Women and Cultural Patriarchy in Politics," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)* Vol 3, no. 3 (2020): 2158–64.

⁹² Anne Maria Holli, "Strong Together? A Comparative Study of the Impact of the Women's Movement on Policy-Making in Finland," in *Women's Citizenship and Political Rights* (Springer, 2006), 127–53.

Female members of the BAPEKAM can advocate in several forms, such as drafting village regulations that support women and children and ensuring gender equality in various fields, including education, politics, and health. Additionally, they can be good receptors of aspirations, ensuring that every voice is heard and understood, especially the aspirations of fellow women.

In addition to the function of drafting village regulations, the BAPEKAM also needs to focus on the function of supervising the performance of the village government, especially related to women's empowerment programs and village programs that support women and children⁹³. Supervision of village finances is also important to ensure the improvement of community welfare and the development of village infrastructure that encourages local economic development. This supervisory function must be carried out continuously to prevent the misuse of power by village officials in implementing development in the village⁹⁴.

The appointment of members of the Village Consultative Body in Siak needs to consider female representatives as an important requirement. The number of BPKAM members is determined between 5 to 9 people, considering the area, female representation, population, and the financial capacity of the village, in accordance with the provisions of Siak District Regulation Number 17 of 2018. Female representatives participating in the selection of BAPEKAM members must meet the requirements as prospective members of the BAPEKAM and be able to voice and advocate for women's interests. Currently, the role of women in leadership positions in the village is increasingly recognized, in line with the increasing number of women holding leadership positions in various villages in Indonesia.

The active role of women in increasing women's participation and community empowerment is carried out through various forums, such as the PKK (Family Welfare Movement), *Dharmawanita*, and other social communities, aimed at strengthening the foundation of development from the village to the district level. These initiatives are often led by the wives of officials in the Siak District Government, with efforts to strengthen emotional bonds among women and build solid cooperation to support the regional government's development plans. The Head of the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning also emphasizes the importance of this role.

⁹³ Hasbullah, Yuliani, and As' ari, "Ambiguity and Conflict in the Implementation of Policies for Determining Traditional Villages in Siak Regency."

⁹⁴ Rangi Ade Febrian, Andriyus Andriyus, and Mendra Wijaya, "Regional Government Innovation Development Strategy In Indonesia," 2021.

The implementation of the Village Law to build independent villages provides important hope for the community⁹⁵. A fundamental effort in realizing independent villages is by optimizing the community empowerment process, especially women's groups, in the planning, budgeting, and supervision processes⁹⁶. After the reform era and with the strengthening of democratization and human rights protection, the political position of women is increasingly recognized and considered in the success of the national development agenda.

Based on data from the Village Community Empowerment Office of Siak District, it is known that there are 122 villages in Siak, with the number of Village Consultative Body (BAPEKAM) members varying between 5, 7, and 9 individuals, depending on the area and population in each village, in accordance with the Siak District Regulation regarding BAPEKAM, as explained by Mr. Arifin, the Head of the Village Community Empowerment Office of Siak District. There has been active participation of women in the Siak District BAPEKAM, with 5 female village heads/chiefs and 1 woman in the Siak Regional People's Representative Council. However, in the democratic and direct election process by the community, the votes for female representatives tend to be outnumbered by the votes for male representatives in the competition for positions in the BAPEKAM.

This situation encourages women to become more innovative and energetic in advocating for the interests of the community in their area, as the representation of women in the BAPEKAM serves as a representation to realize the interests of the represented community. Therefore, systematic and sustainable efforts are needed, starting with providing appropriate political education to the community and offering gender-based programs to encourage greater community participation.

The Siak District Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning implements programs aimed at increasing women's understanding of law and politics, as well as conducting gender education and developing women-friendly villages and gender equality. However, the implementation of these programs depends on the availability of budgets and planning proposed by each relevant section or department related to women's empowerment programs.

⁹⁵ Lukman Santoso, "Construction of Village Autonomy Regulation in Achieving People's Welfare: Critical Review Law Number 6 of 2014 on Villages," *Al-Daulah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Perundangan Islam* 11, no. 1 (2021): 47–74.

⁹⁶ Ismail Ismail, Yusuf Hidayat, and Ahmad Yunani, "Effectiveness of Village Fund Management in Community Empowerment," *International Journal Political, Law, and Social Science* 3, no. 1 (2022).

In an effort to increase women's participation in community empowerment in Siak District, planned steps involving various parties, such as female staff, non-governmental organizations, and policy research centers focusing on women's rights, are needed. Although Gender Mainstreaming policies have been established in Siak District through Regional Regulations, regular concrete steps need to be taken to create strong ideas for strengthening policies that focus on women's roles down to the grassroots level, with support from adequate budgets and infrastructure.

The role of women begins with various activities that emphasize the development and improvement of women's living standards in the region. This includes training to enhance women's self-reliance in the fields of economics, politics, law, and culture. Efforts to improve the quality of life for women need to be enhanced to encourage women's self-reliance in improving their quality of life.

Men and women should receive equal recognition as humans in various aspects of life, as well as have equal access, participation, control, and benefits from development interventions⁹⁷. When talking about women, it is important to consider them as human beings. With a human perspective, we realize that men and women are essentially the same, with equal intelligence, noble character, high aspirations, and similar dreams and hopes. They also have equal potential, both as individuals and as members of society, without discrimination⁹⁸.

Discrimination is one form of human rights violation, and discrimination against women is a violation of women's human rights⁹⁹. Owing to this, women's empowerment is crucial so that women can advocate for their rights, which are often violated. The state has a major responsibility in eradicating discrimination against women because this discrimination is closely related to various issues that are the responsibility of the state, such as poverty, the growth of fundamentalist and conservative religious and cultural views, and restrictions

⁹⁷ S. D Anwar, *Perencanaan Dan Penganggaran Yang Responsif Gender (PPRG) Daerah* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak, 2013).

⁹⁸ T Triana, "Kesetaraan Gender dalam Kepemimpinan," *Posmetro Indragiri*, 2023.

⁹⁹ S Fraser Arvonne, "Becoming Human: The Origins and Development of Women's Human Rights," in *Equality and Non-Discrimination under International Law* (Routledge, 2017), 215–68.

on women's rights in politics and public life. Efforts to address the issue of discrimination against women are very important¹⁰⁰.

Conclusion

Finally, this study highlighted and concluded that the roles of women in the Village Consultative Body (BAPEKAM) are pivotal in shaping policies, advocating for gender equality, and contributing to community development. They are actively involved in providing advice, information, and shaping policies that are equal to the roles of men. Despite facing challenges due to a strong patriarchal culture that can lead to economic and social oppression, women in Siak District have demonstrated resilience and determination in actively participating in decision-making processes. Their involvement in BAPEKAM ensures that women's voices are heard, their perspectives are considered, and their interests are represented in local governance. Efforts to empower women through gender education, women-friendly village initiatives, and gender equality programs reflect a commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable society. By encouraging women's participation and recognizing their contributions, Siak government aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society where both men and women have equal opportunities for development and progress.

This study on women's roles in Siak's Village Consultative Body (BAPEKAM) faces several limitations that may influence its findings and interpretations. One significant constraint is the scope of data, which relies heavily on secondary sources and may not fully capture the nuanced experiences of women in BAPEKAM. The study's interpretations, while aiming to respect local cultural norms, might inadvertently apply external perspectives on feminism and gender equality, potentially misrepresenting local dynamics. Additionally, the research's insights, focused on Siak District, might not be universally applicable due to distinct cultural, economic, and social differences across regions. A lack of quantitative data makes it challenging to concretely assess the impact of women's participation in governance. Furthermore, societal changes over time could shift the context within which these findings apply, and responses from participants may be subject to bias, thus affecting the authenticity of the data. Addressing these limitations in future studies could

¹⁰⁰ Ninik Rahayu, "Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Aturan Hukum Dan Implementasinya Di Indonesia Gender Equality in the Rule of Law in Indonesian and Implementation," *Jurnal Legislasi Indonesia* 9, no. 1 (2012): 15–32.

refine our understanding of gender roles in local governance and improve strategies for women's empowerment.

For future research, we recommend to delve deeper into the specific barriers and facilitators that impact women's participation in local government empowerment in Siak District. Exploring the intersectionality of factors such as socio-economic status, education level, and cultural norms could provide valuable insights into designing targeted interventions to enhance women's engagement in decision-making processes. Furthermore, investigating the impact of community perceptions and attitudes towards women in leadership roles could shed light on strategies to promote gender equality and empower women in governance. By addressing these research gaps, future studies can contribute to the advancement of inclusive and equitable practices in local government empowerment in Siak District and beyond.

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