



**WOMEN'S AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONAL
TRANSFORMATION IN PANDEGLANG:
A Study of Gender Mainstreaming in the Context of
Indonesian Islam**

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Abstract: This qualitative case study examines women's agency in advancing gender mainstreaming in Pandeglang Regency, Indonesia. It specifically analyzes how Regional Regulation (*Perda*) No. 5/2021 on Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) is negotiated within a complex socio-religious context. Drawing on feminist historical institutionalism, the study highlights the role of women in building coalitions, reinterpreting religious norms, and navigating various forms of resistance. The findings indicate that gender institutional transformation in Pandeglang is a gradual and dynamic process shaped by women's agency, institutional structures, and prevailing socio-religious norms. Rather than being monolithic, Islamic law emerges as a contested arena in which reinterpretation becomes essential for promoting inclusiveness. This study emphasizes the need to consider the dynamics of local Islamic laws. The challenges include patriarchal norms and conservative religious interpretations. The policy implications are that interventions must be culturally sensitive, aligned with local values, and led by cross-sectoral collaboration. The role of stakeholders, such as progressive religious leaders, women's organizations, and female legislators, is crucial. This study contributes to the understanding of sustainable gender mainstreaming in the Islamic local context of Indonesia.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Women's Agency, Islamic laws, Institutional Transformation, Pandeglang-Banten-Indonesia.

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Introduction

ISLAMIC POLITICS is a lively battleground where conservative and progressive views clash, each shaping gender policies and women's roles in public life in Indonesia. Thinkers like Khaled

About El F'adl¹ and Amina Wadud² oppose literal interpretations of religious texts, which frequently reinforce women's subordination. Instead, they promote contextual interpretations grounded in maqāsid al-sharī'ah in Indonesia.

In the Indonesian context, Kathryn Robinson³ highlighted how Muslim women actively fought for their rights in the *pasca-reformasi* democratization process. Robinson emphasizes that Islam is not a single entity but rather a discursive space contested by various actors, including women who promote interpretations based on social justice. Thus, the progressive Islamic approach is not only an alternative to contextual conservatism but also an important strategy for institutionalizing gender equality through inclusive public policies in Indonesia.⁴

Gender mainstreaming has become a strategy to promote equality in public policies, both globally and nationally. Since the mid-1990s, the democratization process and the influence of global women's issues have driven women's political transformation in Indonesia, marked by increased discussions about expanding women's roles in the public sphere. Robinson⁵ demonstrates how democratic decentralization reshaped the negotiation between Islamic authority and gender reform, creating new institutional spaces for women's political agency while simultaneously enabling conservative contestation at the local level. Kurniawati further shows that women's political participation in local Indonesia is deeply mediated by Islamic networks and patronage structures, highlighting that agency operates within complex socio-religious power relations.⁶ Meanwhile, Brenner highlights

¹ Khaled El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*. (Simon & Schuster, 2014).

² Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Praktyka Teoretyczna, 2013).

³ Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia*, in *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia* (2008), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203891759>.

⁴ Jocelyne Cesari and Jose Casanova, *Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵ Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia*.

⁶ Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi, *Indonesian Women and Local Politics: Islam, Gender and Networks in Post-Suharto Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015).

how democratization intensifies public negotiations over Islamic morality and gender roles, transforming the public sphere into a contested arena where competing visions of gender and religion intersect.⁷ These dynamics constitute the broader political and cultural landscape within which gender mainstreaming initiatives in areas of strong Islamic symbolic identity, such as Pandeglang, Banten Province, have evolved.

This paper aims to examine the institutionalization process of gender mainstreaming policies at the local level through a case study gender equality in Pandeglang, advanced through Regional Regulation No. 5/2021. The legislation stemmed from continuous advocacy, interdisciplinary alliances, and strategic negotiations involving female legislators, activist, and bureaucrats through adaptive strategies (layering, conversion, and bridging) between *Shari'ah* values and public policy.

Complexity of Gender Policy Reformation: Interpretive Methodology

Institutional scholarship emphasizes that gender policy reform is shaped not only by normative commitments but also by structural conditions within political systems. Comparative research demonstrates that women's rights advances are strongly influenced by the degree of institutional openness and the capacity of civil society mobilization to sustain advocacy efforts. Reform becomes possible when state institutions are accessible and when organized actors are able to build coalitions that translate social demands into policy change.⁸

However, institutional change rarely occurs through abrupt rupture. Transformation often unfolds incrementally through layered reinterpretation and gradual adjustment within existing

⁷ Suzanne Brenner, "Private Moralities in the Public Sphere: Democratization, Islam, and Gender in Indonesia," *American Anthropologist* 113, no. 3 (September 2011): 478–90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1433.2010.01355.x>.

⁸ Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, "When Do Governments Promote Women's Rights? A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Sex Equality Policy," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 207–16, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592709992787>.

institutional arrangements.⁹ Such processes allow reform actors to introduce new normative orientations while formally operating within established structures. Importantly, institutions themselves are not gender-neutral. Institutional structures are embedded with gendered norms and practices that shape policy outcomes even when formal equality is proclaimed.¹⁰ This framework helps explain why gender mainstreaming policies may face structural resistance despite formal endorsement at the regulatory level.

Within this framework, agency operating under institutional constraints plays a decisive role in reshaping legal and policy outcomes, as actors strategically navigate existing rules and power hierarchies rather than confronting them directly.¹¹ Women reform actors therefore do not act outside institutional and religious boundaries; instead, they reinterpret and reposition existing norms from within.

Qualitative in nature, this research is designed as a single case study on the dynamics of gender mainstreaming advocacy through the formulation process of the Regional Regulation in Islamic majority regency of Pandeglang. This method enables an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and motivations of actors involved in gender policy decision-making. The descriptive-analytical research design focuses on the complexity of the policy change process and identifying key actors' roles.

Examining the Pandeglang experience through an institutional and normative Islamic lens, this study aims to justify the broader discourse on Islam, gender, and governance, asserting that gender equality policies in Muslim societies must overcome political-

⁹ James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806414>.

¹⁰ Georgina Waylen, "What Can Historical Institutionalism Offer Feminist Institutionalists?," *Politics & Gender* 5, no. 2 (June 2009): 245–53, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09000191>.

¹¹ Patrick Emmenegger, "Agency in Historical Institutionalism: Coalitional Work in the Creation, Maintenance, and Change of Institutions," *Theory and Society* 50, no. 4 (June 2021): 607–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-021-09433-5>.

institutional barriers and engage with religious discourse to encourage sustainable institutional reform.

To portray such, data collection included in-depth interviews with purposive selection of seven female legislators and executive officials as well as four female activists; a review of policy documents, including the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming, DPRD meeting minutes, and reports from women's organizations; and thematic analysis to identify patterns and key factors influencing policy advocacy success. Direct validation with key informants was conducted to strengthen interpretation and minimize potential biases.¹²

Accordingly, the research adopts the Framework for Gender and Institution (FGI), which underscores the reciprocal relationship between institutional frameworks, historical precedents, and gender agency in determining policy outcomes. As interpretation of Islamic law strongly relates, the study incorporates a socio-legal perspective on Islam to strengthen its analysis, acknowledging that Islamic norms and values play a central role in the legitimacy and public acceptance of policy innovation in Muslim-majority regions.

Following Hallaq, Islamic law should be understood as a historically structured juristic system grounded in interpretive methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), rather than merely as religious symbolism.¹³ This perspective underscores that reinterpretations of gender norms operate within an established legal tradition, not outside of it. Grounded in the doctrine of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the Objectives of Islamic Law) and the principles of *'adl* (justice) and *sawā'* (equality), Islamic legal reasoning provides an ethical foundation for normative reinterpretation aligned with gender justice and democratic governance.

¹² John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (United States of America: Sage Publications, 2014); R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, in *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, vol. 30, no. 1 (California: Sage, 2014), <https://doi.org/0.3138/cjpe.30.1.108>.

¹³ Wael B. Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Building upon this framework, Auda conceptualizes *maqāsid al-sharī‘ah* as a systems-based legal philosophy that enables adaptive *ijtihād* oriented toward justice and public welfare.¹⁴ Such a systems approach allows Islamic jurisprudence to respond dynamically to contemporary social realities, including the pursuit of gender equality within public policy of which their structure and agency and process is discussed at the following sections.

Structure and Agency in Gender-Responsive Policy in Pandeglang

Women’s advocacy efforts for Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang Regency reveal a complex interaction among institutional structures, social norms, and women’s political agency. The concept of structure encompasses government institutions and prevailing social norms that regulate individual actions, while agency refers to the capacity of individuals or groups, particularly women, to drive change. This dynamic interaction between structural factors and agency is crucial for understanding the transformation of local gender institution.¹⁵

The role of women in politics and constitutional changes has undergone significant shifts since Indonesia’s independence. Initially, social norms confined women to the domestic sphere.¹⁶ However, women gained greater political power and pushed for constitutional reforms with the strengthening of women’s rights movements, especially during certain periods.¹⁷ Political movements that involved women resisting colonial rule demonstrate that women were active in politics and not merely passive. For example, in the 17th century, a queen led Aceh, and

¹⁴ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008).

¹⁵ Mahoney and Thelen, *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*.

¹⁶ Tegar Putra Munggaran, “Peran Dan Pengaruh Perempuan Dalam Dinamika Politik Di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi* 4, no. 7 (2023): 804–17, <https://doi.org/10.59141/jist.v4i7.653>.

¹⁷ Hardiman Wirahmat, *Eksistensi Politik Perempuan Pasca Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, 2, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.30984/spectrum.v2i2.463>.

women such as Raden Ayu Ageng Serang, Cut Nyak Dien, and Cut Meutia led resistance against Dutch colonial powers. In other regions, such as Minangkabau and South Sulawesi, women also played significant roles, but social norms often marginalized them.¹⁸ Through the 1945 Constitution and its derivative regulations, the The Indonesian Constitution provides a legal basis for advancing gender equality in politics.¹⁹ The women's movement, historically championed by figures such as Kartini, continues to this day, reflecting recurring patterns of resistance and cultivating collective consciousness among women to seek recognition and political representation.²⁰

Pandeglang has a long history of women's involvement in social and religious movements. Organizations such as the Women's Organization Alliance (GOW) have advocated for gender equality policies.²¹ However, the roles of traditional leaders, such as Kyai, have shifted from community advocates to state political actors, indicating how religious structures have been politicized to strengthen state authority.²²

Advocacy efforts for gender mainstreaming policies in Pandeglang face resistance from conservative groups, who see gender issues as threats to social structures and *Shari'ah* values. These tensions manifest in power struggles among local

¹⁸ Moamen Gouda and Niklas Potrafke, "Gender Equality in Muslim-Majority Countries," *Economic System* 40, no. 4 (2016): 683–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecosys.2016.04.002>.

¹⁹ Tony Tedjo, "Examining the Challenges and Opportunities of Women's Leadership in the Modern Era," *Jurnal Multidisiplin Indonesia* 3, no. 4 (2024): 3968–73, <https://doi.org/10.58344/jmi.v3i4.1124>; Anifatul Kiftiyah, "Perempuan Dalam Partisipasi Politik Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Islam Gender Dan Anak*, ahead of print, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.24090/yinyang.v14i1.2019.pp1-13>.

²⁰ Silvy Mei Pradita, "The History of the Indonesian Women's Movement in the 19-20 Century: A Historical Review of the Role of Women in National Education," *Chronologia* 2, no. 1 (2020): 11–24, <https://doi.org/10.22236/jhe.v2i2.6060> 34.

²¹ Gilang Ramadhan et al., *Potret Representasi Gerakan Perempuan Dalam Mendorong Ketahanan Pangan Di Provinsi Banten*, 7, no. 2 (2022): 43–58, <https://doi.org/10.52447/polinter.v7i2.5452>.

²² Yanwar Pribadi, "Religious Networks in Madura: Pesantren, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Kiai as the Core of Santri Culture," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 51, no. 1 (2013): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2013.511.1-32>.

bureaucracies, religious organizations, and civil society groups, leading to dynamic negotiations during policy formulation. Identified key advocacy actors include local women's organizations, progressive religious leaders, and strategic female bureaucrats. Conversely, opponents often base their resistance on conservative religious interpretations and gender-insensitive bureaucrats. While gender mainstreaming policies have strengthened the legitimacy of gender equality advocacy, the policy-making process at the local level still faces structural challenges, such as low gender-responsive budget allocations and limited human resource capacity within local institutions.

In the early post-Reform era, Governing institutions in Pandeglang have yet fully prioritize gender equality and female representation remains limited within decision-making structures. This region, known for its conservative Islamic values, often considers gender issues trivial and culturally sensitive. Over time, however, women began to occupy strategic institutional positions, including in the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), executive agencies, and civil society networks, gradually influencing local policy making environments.

Pandeglang, as an area where conservative Islamic groups are influential, has gradually enabled more women to take on leadership roles. It is noteworthy that the leadership of a female regent, Irna Narulita, has enabled Pandeglang to be officially removed from the list of underdeveloped regions through Ministerial Decree No. 79 of 2019. Irna's leadership demonstrated that women in key positions could enact significant policy changes. Such changes supported broader institutional reform. After becoming part of Banten Province on October 4, 2000, Pandeglang underwent institutional reorganization. It led to a political decision where the regional government transformed the Office of Women's Empowerment into the Office of Population Control, Family Planning, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection (Regional Regulation No. 2021) in December 2021 to promote further gender equality.

The case of Pandeglang illustrates that beyond formal institutional frameworks, local historical dynamics, collective women's movements, and evolving social-religious values heavily

influence advocacy for gender policies and re-interpretation of Islamic law. In Pandeglang, Islamic teachings and religious authority significantly shape public morality and legitimacy. Initially, many stakeholders, especially conservative politicians and bureaucrats, viewed gender mainstreaming as incompatible with Islamic values. However, women activists and progressive religious figures challenged these perceptions by reinterpreting gender justice within an Islamic context.

Strategically, employing Islamic concepts such as *'adl* (justice), *rahmah* (mercy), and *maqashid al-shari'ah* (the objectives of Shari'ah), women advocates positioned gender equality as a moral obligation in Islam, rather than a Western concept.²³ This cultural negotiation made policies more socially acceptable and reduced opposition, particularly from Islamic political parties and traditional *para Kyai* (Islamic Clerics) networks. Reframing gender discourse within an Islamic framework highlights the complex interaction between religious norms, cultural contexts, and policy advocacy in shaping local gender equality initiatives in Indonesia. This approach maintains Islamic values while transforming religion from a source of resistance into a source of normative legitimacy for institutional reform.²⁴

This strategic reinterpretation facilitates the broader acceptance and implementation of gender equality measures, demonstrating the adaptability and relevance of Islamic principles within modern governance and social reform.

Advocacy Actors: Multilevel Mobilization and Political Coalitions

The implementation of the affirmative action plan aims to increase women's representation across various sectors, including formal political positions. Although Pandeglang Regency has seen an increase in the number of female legislators since 2009, current representation still falls short of the 30% quota target.

²³ Deny Hamdani, "The Formalisation of Islamic Attire in Padang, West Sumatra," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 3, no. 1 (2009): 69–96, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2009.3.1.69-96>.

²⁴ Jumadiyah, Sutriani, and Hamdani, "Kodrati Perempuan Dan Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Konsep Islam," *Socius: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 1, no. 12 (2024): 473–77.

Table 1. Representation of DPRD Members in Pandeglang Regency (2009-2024)

ELECTABILITY			
PERIOD	Male	Female	TOTAL
2009 – 2014	45	5	50
2014 – 2019	43	7	50
2019 – 2024	40	10	50

Source: Primary data

From 2009 to 2014, only 10% of DPRD members were women. This figure increased to 14% from 2019 to 2024.²⁵ This upward trend reflects the long-standing efforts of women's movements, which began lobbying for affirmative action as early as 2003. Wardani notes that Indonesia's gender quota system resulted from campaigns that strengthened regulations within the 2008 Election Law.²⁶ Although quota policies have increased representation, some individuals, including women, still oppose them. Perdana²⁷ mentions that some prefer individual achievements over quotas. Nonetheless, in 2008, the Constitutional Court supported affirmative action to promote gender equality in politics. However, increasing the number of women representatives alone does not necessarily guarantee an improvement in the quality of gender democracy. Furthermore, their presence has not yet fully driven substantive policy reform.

Women's presence in the legislature, accompanied by gender awareness and a commitment to social justice to address this complexity,²⁸ showed that increasing women's representation can

²⁵ Hungary Fitria Utami, "Perempuan Dan Politik Analisis Faktor Peningkatan Elektabilitas Perempuan Dalam Pileg Tangerang Selatan Tahun 2019 Di Dapil Tangsel 3" (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2023).

²⁶ Sri Budi, Eko Wardani, and Valina Singka Subekti, "Political Dynasties and Women Candidates in Indonesia's 2019 Election," in *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2021).

²⁷ Aditya Perdana, *The Relationship of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Political Parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia: A Women's CSO Perspective*, 2017, 1–265.

²⁸ Rini Archda Saputri, Mada Sukmajati, and Desintha Dwi Asriani, "POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES," *JWP*

significantly impact policy outcomes. This is evidenced by the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang Regency. This regulation marks a significant milestone in institutionalizing the principle of gender equality in local governance practices and reflects the political agency exercised by women in the legislature.

A principled commitment to social justice in order Increased representation can significantly influence policy outcomes, as exemplified by the enactment of regional regulations on gender mainstreaming in Pandeglang. This regulation is a crucial milestone in institutionalizing local gender equality principles. Governance It reflects the political agency exercised by women in the legislature.²⁹

It took 16 years for regional regulations on gender mainstreaming to be established in Pandeglang after the 2000 Presidential Instruction. This delay was not solely due to administrative issues but also due to significant resistance within existing systems and cultural norms. Local circumstances show that having a female regent responsible for the issue was essential in garnering attention. Gender-focused policies in Pandeglang began with the Regent Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in 2016, which was reinforced when the Regional Regulation was passed in 2021. Developing this regulation was a lengthy and challenging process. The Population Control, Family Planning, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection Agency initially proposed the regulation, but the Regional Legislation Drafting Committee (IV commission) did not follow up until the Regional Regulation Drafting Agency pushed for it. Disagreements arose during the discussions, with some members deeming the regulation non-urgent and potentially disruptive to the social order. This indicates that some officials still hold traditional views

(*Jurnal Wacana Politik*) 8, no. 2 (October 2023): 213, <https://doi.org/10.24198/jwp.v8i2.46956>.

²⁹ Rindi Astika Yuliana and Istiana Hermawati, "Evolusi Representasi Politik Perempuan Di Tingkat Lokal Indonesia: Tantangan Dan Peluang," *Social: Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan IPS* 5, no. 2 (2025): 601–9, <https://doi.org/10.51878/social.v5i2.5733>.

on gender, perceiving discussions on women's issues as disturbances.

A female legislator, RKS, emerged as a key figure advocating for the passage of the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming. RKS consolidated community aspirations within the Regional Legislation Committee, driven by the need to expand legal protections for women, children, and persons with disabilities.³⁰ This was particularly critical because more than half of the women in Pandeglang are unemployed and face domestic violence, making them highly vulnerable. RKS's efforts aimed to persuade legislators to include the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in the 2020 Regional Legislative program although it was ultimately rejected by two factions during plenary sessions.

The advocacy dynamics demonstrated the formation of multi-actor coalitions involving legislative, executive, civil society organizations, and Islamic figures. After Irna was elected as Regent of Pandeglang, support for the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming intensified, with outreach efforts involving the Regional Development Planning Agency, the Women's Empowerment Office, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and female DPRD members.³¹ Despite the challenges in implementing gender-responsive budgeting at the organizational level, the enactment of this regional regulation is expected to improve women's welfare in Pandeglang through more gender-sensitive budgeting policies.

The DPRD's deliberative processes highlight tensions between gender equality and conservatism. In an interview, RKS emphasized that the regulation aims to provide space and support for vulnerable groups, such as women and persons with disabilities, to access justice and equal opportunities, rather than erasing traditional gender roles. The Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming was included in the 2020 Regional Legislation Program. To facilitate in-depth discussions, a Special Committee was formed, which was composed of DPRD members appointed by various factions. This Special Committee engaged in

³⁰ "Interview with the RKS," 2023.

³¹ "Interview with Sutoto," 2024.

activities such as public consultations with regional organization partners and civil society groups, including women's organizations, as well as comparative studies with provinces that have already enacted regional regulations on gender mainstreaming.

The regulation was finally ratified in 2021 after a series of challenging discussions. The successful passage of Regional Regulation No. 5/2021 resulted from sustained coalition building, which is a key mechanism for institutional feminist change.³² Female legislators, such as RKS, played a vital role in establishing cross-faction alliances and engaging civil society and mobilize bureaucratic support. The presence of Irna Narulita, a female regent, further strengthened institutional resolve.

This discussion allows for an analysis of the religious power structure in Pandeglang, the dynamics of conflict and negotiation among various groups, and how Islamic norms and values are used to legitimize or discredit gender policies. Women's involvement in the policy making process not only expanded the deliberative space in the legislative apparatus but also demonstrated that collaborative advocacy could lead to the development of public policies. The Gender Mainstreaming Regional Regulation in Pandeglang is a concrete example of how key actors and women's movements successfully influenced institutional norms through inclusive political collaboration, including direct and indirect involvement of Islamic women's organizations. Religious institutions, such as Muslimat Mathla'ul Anwar, Muslimat NU, and 'Aisyiyah, are seen as actors that reflect institutional flexibility and open space for embedding equality principles within the complex and often resistant socio-religious context.

In an interview with a representative from a women's religious organization in Pandeglang, IF asserted that the figure of Siti Khadijah exemplifies the historical agency of women in Islam. Since the Prophet Muhammad received the first revelation, Khadijah was the first to comfort him and express his unwavering faith. As a wealthy and independent trader, Khadijah actively

³² Emmenegger, "Agency in Historical Institutionalism."

supported the propagation of Islam, not only emotionally but also through significant financial contributions. Her role demonstrates women's strategic capacity within religious and political spaces during the early Islamic period, serving as evidence that women have played transformative roles in shaping social change. Women like Khadijah are seen not only as companions but also as leaders, movers, and protectors of justice values. Therefore, the Gender Mainstreaming Regional Regulation in Pandeglang does not conflict with Islamic values; rather, it embodies the spirit of social justice, which is central to Islamic teachings.³³

The involvement of women's perspectives in politics makes the legislature more open and reflects the fact that policies originate from focused advocacy. The Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) demonstrates how the women's movement in Pandeglang Regency successfully changed institutional norms through political collaboration. This effort aims to legally protect women and improve their living standards through inclusive programs. The lengthy regulation drafting process underscores the need for regulatory support, strong female leadership, consistent advocacy, and the ability to unite diverse groups to advance gender-responsive policies at the local level. Delays in this process indicate gender bias within the power structure, which should be considered when evaluating regional policies. Finally, the Regional Regulation related to PUG entered the discussion phase and was ratified in 2021, becoming the legal basis for GRP management and budgeting.

The process of legislation and its implications

The drafting and implementation of the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang Regency face institutional barriers and cultural resistance within the community. This aligns with the principles of historical institutionalism, which asserts that past decisions and policies

³³ "IF Interview," n.d.

continue to shape current and future policy directions, creating path dependencies that hinder significant change.³⁴

In the case of Pandeglang Regency, the existing gender policies cannot be separated from a long history of women's activism and the social and Political dynamics that have influenced these policies. This aligns with Emmenegger's concept of institutional change. In Pandeglang, Emmenegger concept is justified and useful to understand how women can influence legislation and address participation issues.

Historically, formulating Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang has been a challenging process. The idea for this regulation emerged as early as 2016 but was only proposed in 2019. However, two religious-based factions rejected it, deeming it unpopular among the community for conflicting with their beliefs³⁵. To address this, a *Pansus* (special committee) visited Makassar, which already had a Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming. They found that such regulations improved women's economic and social livelihoods. The committee members also learned effective strategies for explaining the regulation to the public, including religious leaders, by clarifying that the regulation does not violate religious teachings and aims to protect women's rights fairly without altering their identities.

Progressive Islam plays a crucial normative role in this context by challenging exclusive religious interpretations and opening space for reinterpretations of equality values. One prominent Islamic scholar, EMS, based in Pandeglang and the Chairman of the Central Board of Mathla'ul Anwar, stated that Islam regards men and women as equal and complementary beings. "The Qur'an explicitly articulates the principle of equality," he affirms.³⁶ He also highlights Banten's historical role as a pioneer in women's education, noting how Mathla'ul Anwar established the concept of

³⁴ B. G. Peters, Jon Pierre, and D. S. King, "The Politics of Path Dependency: Political Conflict in Historical Institutionalism," *The Journal of Politics* 67, no. 4 (2005): 1275–300, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00360.x>.

³⁵ "Interview with Nurhayati," 2023.

³⁶ "Interview with EMS," 2025.

Women's schools as early as 1930, producing influential national figures such as Maria Ulfah, Indonesia's first female minister.

According to EMS, women are special beings with capacities equal to those of men across various life domains. "Women are equally capable of performing all jobs that men undertake. Even, there are even tasks that women cannot perform, such as pregnancy," he explains. EMS also underscores the intellectual contributions of women in Islamic history, referencing figures such as Aisyah, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, who narrated thousands of *Hadith* and remains a primary reference in Islamic sciences. Furthermore, EMS emphasizes that the principles of gender equality and empowerment are fully aligned with Islamic values, citing the *fatwā* of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) addressing gender biases. He stresses the importance of understanding Islamic values within their social and historical contexts to avoid discriminatory or exclusive interpretations.³⁷

Borrowing the language of Nurcholish Madjid, EMS highlights the importance of drawing modernist elements from classical Islamic sources to reshape religious understanding relevant to contemporary social and historical conditions. For Nurcholish, interpreting religious concepts is not merely doctrinal but also foundational in forming spiritual values that influence social relationships and institutional structures. This perspective resonates with Pandeglang's strong tradition of *majlis ta'lim* (Islamic Study Group), which, according to Hasanah³⁸, signifies that reform movements within these religious gatherings aim not only at personal piety but also at fostering "public holiness."

From a new institutionalism perspective, this view shows that religious institutions are not static but can evolve through the reinterpretation of values and norms by actors who are reflective of their social context. Therefore, the efforts of EMS toward Islamic thought renewal can be understood as an institutional conversion,

³⁷ "Interview with EMS."

³⁸ Umdatul Hasanah, "Majelis Taklim Perempuan Dan Pergeseran Peran Publik Keagamaan Pada Masyarakat Perkotaan Kontemporer [Women's Majelis Taklim and the Shift in the Religious Public Role in Contemporary Urban Society]" (UIN Jakarta, 2014).

Shifting the meanings of traditional institutions to make them more relevant and inclusive of contemporary social challenges.³⁹ The Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming was eventually discussed in 2020 and ratified in 2021 to manage gender programs and budgets. The challenges faced in drafting this regulation in Pandeglang reveal that even when provincial regulations exist, their effective local implementation remains difficult, especially within organizations rooted in traditional, male-centered values. This illustrates the conflict between modern gender policies and traditional social norms, which affects how well gender equality is operationalized locally. Studies show that promoting gender policies in Pandeglang occurs not only within formal political arenas such as the Regional House of Representatives but also through actions outside legislative institutions. Similar to feminist movements elsewhere, the strategies for promoting such policies involve the collaboration of various groups working together to achieve policy change.⁴⁰

This broader approach highlights the importance of multi-actor mobilization—encompassing legislative bodies, executive agencies, civil society, and religious leaders in pushing gender-related reforms. These collective efforts demonstrate that sustained advocacy, strategic alliances, and cross-sector collaboration are crucial for overcoming obstacles and fostering meaningful policy change at the local level, although institutional and cultural resistance remains. Such endeavours ultimately contribute to creating a more inclusive environment that progressively advances gender equality, even within contexts with deeply ingrained social norms.

The development and implementation of the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang exemplifies the complex interplay of institutional history, religious reinterpretation, cultural resistance, and multi-level advocacy. The engagement of diverse women activists, progressive religious

³⁹ Mahoney and Thelen, *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*.

⁴⁰ Htun and Weldon, "When Do Governments Promote Women's Rights? A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Sex Equality Policy."

figures, bureaucrats, and community leaders— underscores the importance of combining normative changes with strategic institutional reform to realize genuine gender equality in a socio-politically conservative context.

Challenges and Interest-Based Conflict Resolutions

Female legislators in Pandeglang play a crucial role in advocating for regional regulation on gender mainstreaming. However, their limited representation in the DPRD (around 14%) presents significant structural challenges. Female legislators employ strategic approaches to address these obstacles, such as utilizing political networks by forming alliances with influential male politicians, maximizing formal DPRD mechanisms through legislation and community consultations, and collaborating with the executive branch, especially with the support of a female regent.

Despite these efforts, resistance from certain factions remains a major hurdle. This study shows that male political actors often perceive the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming as a low priority or contrary to local values, a pattern also observed in other developing countries, such as Brazil and India. This highlights that increasing the presence of women in legislative bodies alone does not guarantee the effective implementation of gender-responsive policies. Instead, sustained strategic actions and persistent advocacy must overcome deeply rooted opposition.⁴¹

The historicity of gender differentiation, as explained by Wahyudi notes that “the history of gender differentiation occurs through a very long and diverse process, which is formed, socialized, reinforced, and even socially and culturally constructed, both through interpretations of religious texts and by the State.”⁴²

⁴¹ Waylen, “What Can Historical Institutionalism Offer Feminist Institutionalists?”

⁴² Very Wahyudi, “Peran Politik Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Gender,” *Politea: Jurnal Politik Islam* 1, no. 1 (2019): 63–83, <https://doi.org/10.20414/politea.v1i1.813>.

Women's organizations also play a vital role in advocating for Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming Pandeglang serves as a bridge between the community and the government. These groups identify strategies to broaden support for the policy and exert pressure on leaders through various promotional activities, including workshops and events emphasizing the importance of gender- focused policies. Additionally, women activists spread stories highlighting human rights and justice, encouraging policymakers to prioritize gender equality.

To strengthen pressure on decision-makers, they leverage social media and collaborate with activist networks. By actively engaging, representing diverse perspectives, and employing both formal and informal strategies to challenge existing structures, civil society actors contribute to transforming gender relations and restructuring institutions. As Ridwan⁴³ emphasized, "The main aspect emphasized by the Qur'an is ensuring that state management refers to the fundamental principles of justice, equality, and deliberation." Although, "in Islamic teachings (Qur'an and Hadith), there are no fixed formulations regarding the form of the state or the political system used. Therefore, political discourse in Islam falls within the realm of ijtihad, which is an interpretative and dynamic thinking process"

The advocacy strategy for the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang can be analyzed through four main forms of gradual institutional change proposed within the framework of Historical Institutionalism, as outlined by Mahoney and Thelen (2009):⁴⁴

Table 2. Four Main Forms of Gradual Institutional Change

Change Typology	Definition	Example
Layering	Gradual modification of the old policies by	Initially only a Regent on Gender

⁴³ Ridwan Ridwan, "Paradigma Relasi Agama Dan Negara Dalam Islam," *Volksgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Dan Konstitusi* 1, no. 2 (2018): 173–84, <https://doi.org/10.24090/volksgeist.v1i2.2139>.

⁴⁴ Mahoney and Thelen, *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*.

	adding new elements over time	Mainstreaming (2014), later upgraded to Regional Regulation (2021)
Conversion	Using old policies with new interpretations to support change	Leveraging the Governor's Regulation and the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) as bases to strengthen the Regional Regulation.
Shifted drifts	Changes in policy function due to social/political developments	The gender quota in the DPRD, initially symbolic, is now actively used to advocate substantive

Source: Mahoney and Thelen (2009)

Findings indicate that institutional transformation is a gradual process that uses existing structures to promote incremental change. Emmenegger⁴⁵ highlighted that deeply rooted institutional barriers, such as the persistence of patriarchal norms, are primary obstacles to the development of progressive and inclusive policies. Rejection of the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming by two DPRD factions during the plenary session further demonstrates the dominance of patriarchal norms within local political structures. As Mursidah states ⁴⁶, "patriarchy is constructed, institutionalized, and socialized through institutions that are present in daily life." This reinforces the understanding that resistance to change is often both ideological and structural. In this context, many actors fear disruptions to the established sociopolitical order, leading them to oppose policies that challenge traditional gender norms.

Beyond structural barriers, broader sociocultural constraints also contribute to delays in ratifying the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang. The social norms that confine women to domestic roles continue to be practiced daily, limiting their active involvement in politics. The internalization of patriarchal values intensifies resistance to initiatives aimed at

⁴⁵ Emmenegger, "Agency in Historical Institutionalism."

⁴⁶ Mursidah Mursidah, "Gerakan Organisasi Perempuan Indonesia Dalam Bingkai Sejarah MUWAZAH," *Jurnal Kajian Gender* 4, no. 1 (2012): 58, <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v4i1>.

strengthening women's participation and representation in legislative processes. As Mufrikah⁴⁷ notes, "patriarchal culture is deeply ingrained in Indonesian society," highlighting the interconnectedness between gender inequality and cultural patterns and institutional structures. Consequently, the challenge in advocating for gender-responsive policies arises not only from formal political systems but also from social constructions that perpetuate gender power imbalances. This combination of institutional and ideological persistence results in layered resistance, where traditional norms and modern policies uneasily coexist.

The data demonstrate that both entrenched institutional norms and evolving ideological dynamics shape gender mainstreaming, particularly regarding women's political engagement. As described by Mahoney and Thalen⁴⁸ "layering" effect in institutional change reveals the co-existence of conservative and progressive norms within the same contexts as local policies are influenced by deeply rooted religious and cultural values, often rooted in conservative interpretations of Islam.

Waylen's perspective⁴⁹ emphasizes that understanding how structural constraints influence agents' agency is crucial in producing responsive gender policies. Within this framework, organizing and mobilizing women across the full spectrum of political processes are critical strategies for overcoming institutional and cultural barriers. Emmenegger⁵⁰ stresses the importance of coalition strength; collaboration among women's actors in the Regional Regulation Drafting Agency and legislative bodies has emerged as a potent approach to advocating for more inclusive policies. Persistent advocacy efforts by women in

⁴⁷ Solkhah Mufrikah, "Keterbatasan Kuota Perempuan Di Parlemen Lokal Indonesia: Analisis Kondisi Kultural Dan Institusional Yang Mempengaruhi Rendahnya Keterwakilan Perempuan Di DPRD Jawa Tengah," *JPW (Jurnal Politik Walisongo)* 2, no. 2 (October 2020): 47–66, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jpw.v2i2.8070>.

⁴⁸ Mahoney and Thelen, *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*.

⁴⁹ Waylen, "What Can Historical Institutionalism Offer Feminist Institutionalists?"

⁵⁰ Emmenegger, "Agency in Historical Institutionalism."

Pandeglang have demonstrated that achieving political equality requires not only institutional support but also a collective push from civil society. Thus, the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming is envisioned to transcend its role as a formal legislative product to serve as a catalyst for social transformation, shifting public perceptions of women's roles and increasing acceptance of gender equality in the public sphere.

Pandeglang's female leadership has adopted long-term strategies to strengthen their position within political structures and promote gender equality across all sectors. Despite the ongoing challenges posed by patriarchal norms and traditional values, the enactment of the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming offers hope for women and society at large to foster a more equal and just environment in politics and governance.

The process of drafting and implementing the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang illustrates how difficult it is for women to effect change within political systems that are still dominated by patriarchal culture. This underscores the importance of consistent collaboration and advocacy for making institutional change more inclusive. Emmenegger⁵¹ noted that the success of institutional change depends on the collective power of a society capable of cross-sector collaboration. In Pandeglang, women have demonstrated this through the formation of strong alliances and networks to fight for gender equality justice. They can overcome obstacles and achieve more sustainable change with adequate political and institutional support.

The recent enactment of Regional Regulation No. 5/2021 on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang represents a significant milestone for women's rights and fair political representation in the region. Franceschet⁵² argued that robust laws are necessary to advance women's rights in politics and to overcome barriers that

⁵¹ Emmenegger, "Agency in Historical Institutionalism."

⁵² Susan Franceschet, "Women in Politics in Post-Transitional Democracies: The Chilean Case," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no. 2 (2001): 207–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740110053010>.

limit women's access to key decision-making roles. Furthermore, she emphasized that legal protection is a key factor in enabling women's participation and advocated for public awareness campaigns to promote gender equality and encourage women's involvement across all life domains. Raising awareness of women's rights at all societal levels is vital to ensure that change occurs not only at policy levels but also in attitudes and behaviors.

The enactment in Pandeglang marks a significant advance despite ongoing challenges related to deep-seated Islamic values and normative practices. This regulation symbolizes the potential for positive change within the social and political landscape depending on the collective commitment of all stakeholders, including the government and civil society. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration and developing gender responsive policies hold promise for creating a more just and equitable future for women in the region.

Local and global dynamic actively shape gender equality advocacy in Pandeglang, with national policy frameworks exerting significant influence over its direction and implementation. Kadriyah and Azis⁵³ highlight that the movement of women across various Islamic countries continues to progress. For example, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran advocate for women's rights to achieve justice and equality. Similarly, Moroccan legal reforms related to family law have emerged through collaborations between feminist activists and political parties⁵⁴. This demonstrates that change in gender policies often results from collective efforts combining advocacy, legal reform, and political support, underscoring the global interconnectedness of women's rights movements.

⁵³ Siti Maryamah Kadriyah et al., "Tantangan & Dinamika Politik Gender Di Dunia Islam: Analisis Komparatif Mesir, Turki, Dan Arab Saudi," *Jurnal TAPIS* 20, no. 1 (2024): 141–65.

⁵⁴ Fatima Sadiqi and Moha Ennaji, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa Agents of Change* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

Conclusion

The success of gender policy advocacy at the sub-national level, as exemplified by the case of Pandeglang, is significantly influenced by a confluence of factors: the persistent influence of patriarchal norms within political and bureaucratic structure, the strategic agency and coalition-building efforts of women and progressive local actors, and the leveraging of broader national and global momentum for gender equality⁵⁵. The enactment of the Regional Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in Pandeglang represents a milestone resulting from sustained, multifaceted advocacy strategies. These strategies combined incremental steps with a strategic reframing of gender issues within the local socio-religious context and engagement with the local community. Progressive religious interpretations, demonstrating a deliberate effort to overcome deeply entrenched resistance.

This study demonstrates the intricate dynamics of women's political agency in promoting gender mainstreaming policies in Pandeglang-Banten, Indonesia. Through a feminist historical institutionalist framework, the study underscores the critical roles of strategic coalition-building, adaptive leadership, and the reinterpretation of Islamic values in driving institutional change. Despite persistent resistance rooted in patriarchal norms and conservative religious values, women's collective advocacy has successfully positioned gender equality as a core policy priority. The findings emphasize the role of local agency in mediating global gender norms and fostering substantive representation, particularly within the context of progressive Islamic politics that support justice and equality reinterpretations.

The Pandeglang case study provides valuable insights into how advocacy and cross-sector mobilization can reshape institutional trajectories toward more inclusive governance models. The success of gender policy advocacy at the regional level hinges on addressing the continued dominance of patriarchal attitudes, leveraging the strategic role and agency of women, and

⁵⁵ Shirin Rai, *Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women: Mainstreaming Gender, Democratizing the State?* In: *Mainstreaming Gender, Democratizing the State* (Routledge, 2017), 15–39.

harnessing the dynamics of gender affirmation at the national and global levels.

This study acknowledges several limitations, including its focus on Pandeglang Regency, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions in Indonesia. Therefore, it highlights a future recommendation of comparative research with other regions that have implemented similar policies, and it does not include a longitudinal evaluation to observe long-term impacts. Further research is needed to evaluate the long-term effects of this Regional Regulation and to conduct comprehensive implementation studies.

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