

ABSTRACT

Women's representation in political decision-making structures is crucial to ensure that women's voices and needs are accommodated in public policy. This study aims to understand the perceptions of religious leaders regarding women's representation in the Ciamis Regency DPRD using a qualitative phenomenological approach. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of the views and attitudes of religious leaders as religious and cultural figures who have a significant influence in local communities. The findings show that the kyai support women's involvement in politics as part of democracy and inclusive social development. The kyai consider women to have intellectual and emotional capacities that are equal to or even superior to men in policy-making. In addition, the kyai emphasize the importance of women's physical presence in the DPRD so that women's voices and experiences can be directly represented, not only through male representatives. The kyai also acknowledge obstacles such as lack of political education, patriarchal culture, and biological factors affecting women, but emphasize that these are not reasons to hinder women's active role in politics. The kyai's support for the 30% quota policy for women's representation in the DPRD is considered a positive first step, but it needs to be accompanied by education and empowerment of women so that the quota has a substantive impact on policy-making. This study confirms the important role of kyai as agents of social change amid local cultural dynamics that are steeped in Islamic boarding school values. Thus, women's representation in the Ciamis DPRD can be strengthened through synergy between the support of kyai, political education, and women's empowerment to achieve gender equality in local politics.

Keywords: *women's representation, DPRD, kyai, perception, politics, political education, women's quota, gender equality*