Analysis Of Women's Perception of the Effectiveness of Gender-Based Violence Protection Policies in Balikpapan

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Abstract. Gender-based violence remains pervasive in Indonesia, yet the practical effectiveness of protection policies at the local level is not well understood. This study aims to analyze women's perceptions of the effectiveness of gender-based violence protection policies in Balikpapan by exploring how the regulatory framework is experienced in practice, what barriers hinder access to services, and how local government and community actors shape policy implementation. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research draws on in-depth interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis to capture institutional dynamics and lived experiences across relevant service and governance settings. The findings show that, although policies such as the establishment of the UPTD PPA and related mechanisms provide a formal structure for protection, their perceived effectiveness is significantly constrained by structural limitations, entrenched cultural stigma, psychological trauma, and institutional inefficiencies. Simultaneously, the collaborative engagement of local government, community cadres, and civil society organizations illustrates the critical role of shared governance in enhancing accessibility, legitimacy, and trust in protection services. The study concludes that meaningful protection cannot be secured by legal frameworks alone but requires an inclusive, responsive, and context-sensitive implementation strategy that addresses systemic and socio-cultural obstacles. The novelty of this research lies in integrating women's perceptions, multi-level barriers, and governance configurations within a single analytical framework. It contributes empirically and conceptually to debates on localized gender-based violence governance and offers actionable insights for strengthening community-embedded protection systems in comparable urban settings.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence; Violence Against Women; Protection Policy; Implementation; Local Governance

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive and persistent violation of human rights that continues to attract serious attention in global policy, academic, and advocacy arenas. It refers to acts of violence directed at individuals based on their sex or gender, with the intention of harassing, subordinating, or harming victims on the basis of gender or sexuality (Rahmi, 2018). GBV encompasses a wide spectrum of manifestations, including physical assault, sexual violence such as rape and harassment, psychological abuse, threats, intimidation, bullying, economic deprivation, socio-cultural exclusion, and digital violence such as the unauthorized dissemination of personal information. Recent studies underline that GBV is embedded in broader structures of inequality and power, and that discourses of "empowerment" and protection are often not matched by the lived realities of survivors (Breton, 2023). At the service-delivery level, international research shows that women frequently encounter significant obstacles when attempting to access protection and support services, particularly in contexts marked by migration, marginalization,

and institutional fragility (Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2015; Messing et al., 2015; Xie & Baumer, 2019).

In Indonesia, as in many other countries, GBV constitutes not only a legal problem but also a complex socio-cultural and developmental challenge. Empirical analyses indicate that violence against women is patterned by intersecting factors such as economic vulnerability, regional disparities, and persistent gender norms (Prabawaningrum, 2024). National statistics from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) and administrative data systems consistently record high numbers of cases, suggesting both the magnitude of the problem and the gradual strengthening of reporting mechanisms. However, these figures still underestimate the real incidence of violence due to pervasive underreporting, driven by stigma, fear, and limited trust in institutions (Paramesheila Thalia et al., 2025). Within this broader landscape, Indonesia provides a critical setting for examining how formal legal and policy commitments to GBV prevention and response are translated—or fail to be translated—into effective protection for women in their everyday lives.

At the normative level, Indonesia has introduced important legal reforms to address GBV. Gender-based violence is regulated under Law Number 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes, complemented by provisions in the Criminal Code (KUHP). These frameworks are designed to provide more comprehensive protection for victims, ensure legal certainty for perpetrators, and strengthen efforts for the prevention and handling of sexual violence cases in society (Defika Yulita Nirmalasari, 2024; Rahmi, 2018). They also express the state's formal commitment to guaranteeing human rights and addressing types of sexual and gender-based violence that were previously overlooked or inadequately accommodated within the legal system. Nevertheless, despite these advances, the persistence and even escalation of reported GBV cases at the national and regional levels indicate that legal codification alone has not sufficed to curb violence or ensure meaningful access to justice and support (Prabawaningrum, 2024; Paramesheila Thalia et al., 2025).

The main research problem, therefore, lies in the gap between the existence of increasingly sophisticated legal and policy frameworks and their limited effectiveness as experienced by women on the ground. Although the law articulates a clear normative stance, its implementation has been criticized for being predominantly reactive and court-centric, providing protection only once cases have escalated to formal criminal proceedings (Panggabean et al., 2024). Monitoring and security systems have not yet functioned optimally, and the policies that have been established have not become an effective deterrent for perpetrators of GBV to cease their actions (Ali et al., 2025). Data from Komnas Perempuan in 2023 record 289,111 cases nationally, while SIMFONI

PPA data as of July 2025 indicate approximately 14,039 cases of violence against women and children, with an increase of more than 2,000 cases within the last 17 days of that month (Komparanwomen, 2025). These patterns suggest that legal reforms have not yet fully instilled strong awareness in society regarding the dangers and serious impacts of GBV, nor have they resolved structural and cultural barriers that prevent women from seeking help (Tellys Corliana, 2022; Mustika & Tellys Corliana, 2022).

Against this backdrop, common policy responses in Indonesia and elsewhere have often emphasized the strengthening of criminal justice mechanisms as a primary solution to GBV. Legal scholarship calls for more effective criminal policy, including clearer classification of sexual offences, enhanced investigative procedures, and more stringent sentencing to reinforce deterrence (Ali et al., 2025; Panggabean et al., 2024; Paramesheila Thalia et al., 2025). Other contributions stress the need to improve the consistency and fairness of legal protection for women and children, particularly in cases of sexual violence, by clarifying rights to legal aid, restitution, and child-sensitive procedures (Defika Yulita Nirmalasari, 2024). While these approaches are indispensable, international evidence also warns that a narrow focus on punitive measures can leave unaddressed the broader social, cultural, and institutional conditions that enable GBV, as well as the everyday barriers that shape victims' decisions to report or remain silent (Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2015; Breton, 2023; Xie & Baumer, 2019).

Beyond generic criminal justice reform, recent scientific literature has proposed more specific solutions aimed at embedding gender perspectives and survivor-centred principles within policy design and implementation. Arda & Yanti (2025) highlight the importance of integrating gender considerations into criminal justice policies through regulatory reform, improved law enforcement mechanisms, and technology-based reporting innovations that facilitate more responsive case management. Similarly, Trisnawati & Firsty Chintya Laksmi Perbawani (2024), drawing on the Istanbul Convention, demonstrate that international regimes can enhance the effectiveness of GBV responses when standards for prevention, protection, and prosecution are institutionalized coherently across legal and administrative arrangements. From another angle, Dara Maisun et al. (2022) show how the internalization of egalitarian gender norms and the preservation of indigenous cultural values that uphold women's dignity can significantly reduce the incidence of domestic violence, underscoring the importance of culturally grounded solutions. Together, these studies suggest that effective GBV governance requires both robust legal frameworks and deeper transformations in institutional practice and everyday social relations.

At the local level, institutional and community-based innovations have emerged as concrete expressions of such solutions. The Balikpapan City Government, for example, has undertaken

various strategic measures to address and prevent violence against women and children. A central initiative is the establishment of the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for the Protection of Women and Children (UPTD PPA), which provides free services including complaint handling, case management, temporary shelter, mediation, and victim assistance (Samsul et al., 2024). Complementing these formal mechanisms, community-based structures such as the Community-Based Integrated Women and Children Protection (PPATBM) and neighborhood-level Women and Children Protection Cadres (PPART) function as extensions of the state in the initial handling of violence cases and in community-level prevention (Hajar Nur Fathur Rohmah & Neneng Julianti, 2025). Similar efforts elsewhere, including village-level protection groups and regional strategies in Papua Selatan, underscore a broader movement toward locally rooted, collaborative protection arrangements (Prisko Djawaria & Ferdinanda Gole Malo, 2024; Sukirman et al., 2024).

The existing literature on GBV governance, however, remains fragmented in several important respects. Legal and policy analyses have largely concentrated on doctrinal aspects of criminal justice reform and the alignment of domestic frameworks with international standards (Arda & Yanti, 2025; Trisnawati & Firsty Chintya Laksmi Perbawani, 2024). Sociocultural studies, including those conducted in Aceh and other regions, provide crucial insights into household-level norms and community perceptions of violence (Dara Maisun et al., 2022; Prabawaningrum, 2024). Meanwhile, research on local protection mechanisms typically focuses on institutional design, capacity constraints, and coordination challenges within state and community systems (Sukirman et al., 2024; Belletti et al., 2017; Head, 2016; Howlett, 2018). Yet relatively few studies systematically integrate women's own perceptions of policy effectiveness with a fine-grained analysis of multi-level barriers and shared governance arrangements in specific urban settings such as Balikpapan (Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2015; Breton, 2023; Inayatillah et al., 2025). This gap limits our ability to understand how GBV protection policies are actually experienced by their intended beneficiaries and how local institutional configurations shape those experiences.

This study addresses that gap by advancing a conceptual and empirical focus on women's perceptions of GBV protection policies within the concrete governance context of Balikpapan. Perception is understood here as a process through which individuals select, organize, and interpret information from their environment, shaped by experience, values, knowledge, emotions, and social context (Robbins, 2003; Kotler & Keller, 2008; Snyder et al., 2015). On this basis, the study hypothesizes that women's evaluations of policy effectiveness are not solely determined by knowledge of legal provisions, but by the interplay between regulatory

frameworks, structural and cultural barriers, and the accessibility and responsiveness of local protection institutions such as the UPTD PPA, PPATBM, and PPART (Samsul et al., 2024; Hajar Nur Fathur Rohmah & Neneng Julianti, 2025). The scope of the research is thus delimited to the city of Balikpapan, with a focus on women's lived interactions—direct or indirect—with formal and community-based mechanisms designed to protect them from GBV.

Accordingly, this study pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it seeks to analyze how women in Balikpapan perceive the effectiveness of existing GBV protection policies, including the extent to which these policies are viewed as accessible, responsive, and legitimate. Second, it aims to identify and interpret the structural, cultural, psychological, and institutional factors that hinder women's access to legal and social protection services, despite the formal presence of supportive frameworks (Ali et al., 2025; Tellys Corliana, 2022; Paramesheila Thalia et al., 2025). Third, it examines how local government and community actors—particularly the UPTD PPA, PPATBM, and PPART—contribute to shaping these perceptions through their roles in policy implementation, coordination, and community engagement (Prisko Djawaria & Ferdinanda Gole Malo, 2024; Sukirman et al., 2024). These objectives are operationalized through the following research questions: (1) How do women in Balikpapan perceive the effectiveness of gender-based violence protection policies? (2) What barriers do they encounter when attempting to access legal and social protection services? and (3) How do local governmental and community-based actors influence the perceived effectiveness of these protection policies?

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to address the research problems concerning women's perceptions of the effectiveness of gender-based violence protection policies and the factors that hinder their access to legal and social assistance services. A qualitative descriptive design was deemed appropriate because it allows an in-depth exploration, interpretation, and systematic description of meanings, experiences, and evaluations constructed by women and key institutional actors within their social and policy context. Through this approach, the study sought not only to document the existence of protection mechanisms but also to understand how these mechanisms are perceived, accessed, and experienced in practice.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted in Balikpapan, focusing on institutional settings and service units that play a central role in the implementation of gender-based protection policies. The primary research sites comprised the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and

Family Planning, and the Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) for Women and Children Protection (PPA), with supporting locations at the UPT Police Department and the East Kalimantan Regional Police (Polda). The main subjects of the research were women residing in Balikpapan who had knowledge of, or experience with, gender-based violence and/or the existing protection services. In addition, key informants included officials from relevant government agencies, law enforcement officers, medical personnel, and community service organizations who were directly involved in the prevention and handling of cases. Participants were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research questions and their capacity to provide rich and varied information on the functioning and perceived effectiveness of protection policies.

Materials and Research Instruments

The materials used in this study consisted of both empirical and documentary sources. Empirical materials included narrative accounts obtained from women respondents and key informants, as well as field notes generated during observations at service units and related institutional environments. Documentary materials comprised official regulations and policies, institutional reports, statistical records, and other supporting archives related to the implementation of gender-based violence protection in Balikpapan. The main research instruments were semi-structured interview guides tailored for women respondents and institutional informants, non-participant observation sheets to record service processes and interactions, and documentation checklists to ensure systematic collection of relevant written materials. These instruments were designed to maintain consistency across data collection while allowing sufficient flexibility to probe emerging issues in depth, in line with qualitative research standards.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face with women respondents and key informants from the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning, the UPTD PPA, the UPT Police Department, the East Kalimantan Regional Police, health service units, and community service organizations. Interviews followed semi-structured guides, enabling the researcher to explore participants' perceptions of policy effectiveness, concrete experiences of accessing protection services, and perceived barriers in the legal and social support system. Direct observations were carried out in service settings to capture the dynamics of case handling, interaction patterns between officers and service users, and the practical operation of procedures and facilities. Documentation techniques were employed to collect policy documents, operational

guidelines, statistical data, and institutional reports relevant to gender-based violence protection. Primary data were derived from direct interactions with respondents and observations, while secondary data were obtained from official documents, reports, and supporting archives.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of three interrelated components: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data condensation was carried out by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents into meaningful categories related to women's perceptions, policy implementation, and barriers to access. Data display involved the systematic organization of condensed data into matrices, charts, and narrative summaries to facilitate the identification of emerging patterns, relationships, and contrasts across different participant groups and institutional settings. Conclusion drawing and verification were conducted through iterative interpretation of the displayed data, continuous comparison between cases and sources, and the refinement of emerging propositions regarding the effectiveness of protection policies and the configuration of access barriers. These three components were implemented simultaneously and continuously throughout the research process, allowing for progressive deepening of analytical insights and alignment with the research problems addressed (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014).

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, the study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria in accordance with qualitative research standards. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources (women respondents, institutional informants, documents), triangulation of techniques (interviews, observation, documentation), and, where possible, member checking of key interpretations with selected informants. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and institutional arrangements, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings with similar conditions. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a clear and systematic audit trail of the research procedures, including documentation of sampling decisions, interview protocols, observation procedures, and analytical steps. Confirmability was strengthened through the systematic organization of data and reflexive documentation of analytical decisions, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the empirical evidence rather than in researcher bias.
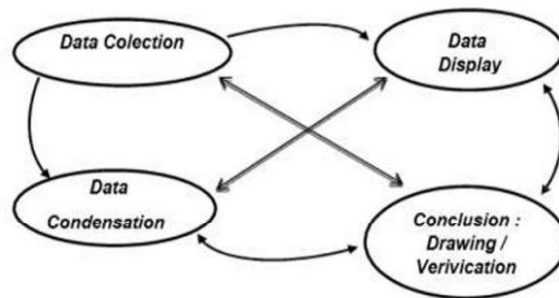
Figure 1. Components of Data Analysis (Interactive Model)

Source: Miles and Huberman in Parhan, 2021

Figure 1 illustrates the three main components of the interactive model of qualitative data analysis: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data condensation refers to the process of simplifying, selecting, and transforming raw data into more focused and organized forms. Data display involves presenting the condensed data in structured formats, such as matrices, diagrams, or narrative tables, to facilitate comprehension and further analysis. Conclusion drawing and verification constitute the stage where meanings, patterns, and findings are inferred and continuously checked against the data. These three components are not linear but occur in an iterative, cyclical, and mutually reinforcing manner throughout the research process (Miles and Huberman in Parhan, 2021).

RESULT

The findings of this study present a comprehensive overview of women's perceptions regarding the effectiveness of gender-based violence protection policies in Balikpapan. Data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation provide insights into how these policies are interpreted by the target groups and the extent to which available instruments respond to real needs in the field. The analysis highlights the interaction between formal regulations and the social, cultural, and psychological contexts that shape women's experiences as beneficiaries.

The results reveal variations in perceptions among women, influenced by their level of legal awareness, personal experiences, and the social support they receive. This condition demonstrates that protection policies are not merely evaluated based on their regulatory framework but also on the presence of services, the responsiveness of authorities, and community attitudes. Such interpretations uncover dynamics that are more complex than a simple assessment of legal provisions.

The study further identifies several barriers faced by women when attempting to access protection services (Briones‑Vozmediano et al., 2015; Corboz et al., 2023). These barriers include structural factors such as limited facilities, cultural elements in the form of stigma and social pressures, and personal dimensions such as fear or deep trauma. These challenges present

significant obstacles that require serious attention in policy implementation to ensure that protection can be equally accessible to all target groups (Cosgrove & Loucks, 2015; Sepúlveda Carmona, 2017).

The analysis also emphasizes the critical role of local government, protection institutions, and community actors in executing strategic responsibilities. Policy implementation cannot function effectively without strong coordination and cross-sectoral collaboration. This understanding reinforces that the research findings not only describe empirical conditions but also provide an avenue for reflection on the actual effectiveness of existing protection policies.

Women's Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Gender-Based Violence Protection Policies in Balikpapan

Women's perceptions of the effectiveness of gender-based violence protection policies in Balikpapan constitute a crucial dimension for evaluating the success of policy implementation (Inayatillah et al., 2025). Perception reflects not only how individuals interpret information but also how they assign meaning to their lived experiences when engaging with protective mechanisms (Amod et al., 2019; Ponew et al., 2023). In the case of Balikpapan, women's views are shaped by direct encounters with state institutions, civil society actors, and community-based initiatives designed to address gender-based violence. The diversity of these perceptions demonstrates the extent to which policy frameworks are translated into tangible experiences and outcomes.

The study reveals that many women acknowledge the formal existence of policies such as the establishment of the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for Women and Children Protection (UPTD PPA). This acknowledgment indicates an awareness that the government has sought to institutionalize protection through specialized agencies (Head, 2016; Šūmane et al., 2018). However, awareness alone does not equate to confidence in the system's effectiveness. A significant proportion of women report that while services such as counseling, legal aid, and temporary shelter exist in principle, accessibility remains a challenge. Factors such as distance, bureaucratic complexity, and the lack of clear information about procedures often limit the practical utility of these services (Pepinsky et al., 2017).

Perceptions are further influenced by the responsiveness of law enforcement agencies and the attitudes of officials toward survivors (Franklin et al., 2020; Messing et al., 2015; Xie & Baumer, 2019). Positive experiences, such as prompt assistance and empathetic treatment, contribute to the perception that protection mechanisms are reliable. Conversely, instances of dismissive behavior or prolonged case handling create skepticism about the state's capacity to protect victims. These divergent experiences suggest that the effectiveness of policies is not

determined solely by their design but also by the quality of their implementation and the professionalism of those tasked with enforcement (Coburn et al., 2016; Howlett, 2018).

Social and cultural factors exert a strong influence on women's perceptions. In a context where stigma and victim-blaming remain prevalent, some women perceive protection policies as ineffective because societal pressures discourage them from seeking formal assistance. Fear of being ostracized by family or community members undermines the willingness to report cases, leading to the perception that the protective system is inaccessible or irrelevant. These cultural dynamics illustrate that the perceived effectiveness of policies cannot be separated from the broader environment in which women negotiate their safety and dignity.

Another recurring theme in women's perceptions concerns the preventive rather than reactive function of protection policies. Many respondents suggest that existing frameworks are heavily oriented toward responding to incidents after they occur, with limited emphasis on educational or preventive measures. This reactive orientation fosters the perception that policies lack the capacity to reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence at its roots. In this regard, women highlight the importance of community education, awareness campaigns, and early intervention programs as crucial components of a more effective protection system.

Variations in perception also stem from differences in socioeconomic background, education, and access to information (Aleksandrova, 2020, 2020; Buffel et al., 2023). Women with higher levels of education and stronger social networks are more likely to perceive the system as accessible, whereas those from marginalized groups often describe the policies as distant and bureaucratic (Kumar et al., 2019; Park, 2022). This disparity points to the uneven reach of protective measures and highlights the need for more inclusive approaches that ensure no segment of the population is excluded from protection.

Women's perceptions of gender-based violence protection policies in Balikpapan underscore the gap between regulatory frameworks and lived realities (Prabawaningrum, 2024; Tjitrawati & Romadhona, 2025; Zulfiani et al., 2025). While formal structures and institutions exist, their effectiveness is perceived as conditional upon accessibility, responsiveness, and cultural acceptance. These perceptions highlight the importance of integrating social dimensions into policy evaluation, moving beyond legalistic indicators to consider how policies are experienced by the very individuals they are intended to protect. Such insights are indispensable for informing reforms that can transform formal commitments into effective safeguards for women's rights and well-being.
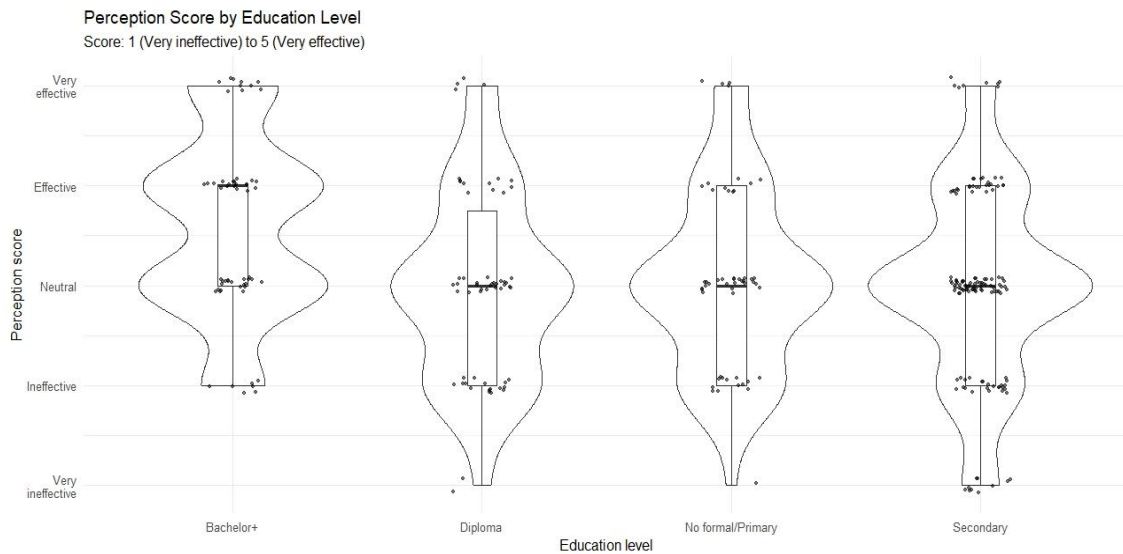
Figure 2. Analysis of Women's Perception Survey regarding policy effectiveness

Source: data processed by researchers

Figure 2 represents a methodological attempt to illustrate women's perceptions of the effectiveness of gender-based violence protection policies in Balikpapan. The simulated data, which resembles survey responses, captures variations in individual experiences by incorporating demographic attributes such as educational attainment and place of residence. This design choice reflects an academic tradition in social research that emphasizes a stratified perspective, recognizing that perceptions of policy effectiveness are rarely homogeneous across populations (Agnew et al., 2023; Alam & Mohanty, 2023; Kopec, 2023).

A stacked bar chart constructed from the simulated data set provides a proportional representation of perception categories—ranging from "very ineffective" to "very effective"—across different education groups. This form of visualization aligns with the analytical logic of comparative policy studies, where subgroups are assessed not only by their absolute numbers but also by the relative proportion of their attitudes or experiences. By presenting categories in a proportional format, the chart allows for the detection of subtle but significant differences in how education shapes policy perceptions. For example, the higher proportion of "effective" or "very effective" responses among women with a bachelor's degree suggests a positive correlation between formal education and confidence in institutional protection mechanisms (Benito et al., 2021; Godefroidt et al., 2017; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019).

The second visualization, which combines violin plots, boxplots, and jitter observations, extends the depth of the analysis by presenting the distribution of perception scores as continuous data. This layered visualization approach provides not only measures of central tendency and dispersion but also a nuanced understanding of within-group variability. The violin components

depict response density, the boxplots show the interquartile range and median, while the jitter points highlight individual variation. The methodological triangulation in such visualizations embodies the academic principle of complementarity, where multiple perspectives are combined to achieve a more comprehensive representation of social phenomena (Caillaud et al., 2019).

The narrative embedded in this visualization suggests several theoretical implications. First, women's perceptions are strongly influenced by structural determinants such as access to education, which not only equips individuals with a greater awareness of legal rights but also increases their confidence in navigating bureaucratic processes. Second, residential patterns, while not plotted directly, remain an important covariate in the dataset and underscore the importance of spatial inequality in shaping perceptions of state capacity. Women living in rural areas, for example, may report lower levels of effectiveness due to infrastructure constraints, limited service coverage, or cultural stigmas that inhibit reporting.

From an academic perspective, this visualization serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, this visualization serves as a descriptive tool, offering a systematic overview of how perceptions are distributed across social categories. On the other hand, it also acts as a heuristic device, stimulating theoretical reflection on the relationship between policy frameworks and lived experiences. The presence of variation within each educational group, as shown in the violin plots, suggests that individual experiences and micro-level contexts mediate the relationship between formal education and policy perceptions. This observation aligns with interpretive policy analysis, which posits that citizen engagement in governance is filtered through subjective meanings and everyday interactions, rather than determined solely by structural variables.

The methodological choice to simulate and visualize perceptions further highlights the importance of quantitative illustration in qualitative research contexts. While the underlying research design may be qualitative and descriptive, the integration of visual data allows for the communication of complex patterns in a more accessible and analytically rigorous manner. This reflects a broader trend in contemporary public policy research, which increasingly values mixed-methods approaches as a means to triangulate findings and strengthen validity.

The resulting code and visualizations go beyond simply displaying numerical outputs; Both contribute to the academic discourse on the interaction between social characteristics and perceptions of gender-based violence protection policies. The graph depicts patterns of trust, skepticism, and neutrality that characterize women's responses to the existing institutional framework in Balikpapan. These patterns provide valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners who wish to understand the effectiveness of protection systems not only in terms of (Lane et al., 2016).

Factors Hindering Access to Women and Children Protection Services

Barriers to accessing protection services for women and children in Balikpapan represent a multidimensional problem that intersects structural, cultural, psychological, and institutional factors. These barriers significantly affect the degree to which policies designed to protect vulnerable groups can be translated into meaningful, practical outcomes. While the state has established institutional frameworks such as the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for Women and Children Protection (UPTD PPA) and community-based mechanisms, the lived experiences of women demonstrate that accessibility is far from universal. Academic analysis of these impediments requires a comprehensive exploration of both systemic and individual-level constraints.

Structural barriers constitute one of the most visible obstacles in the accessibility of services. Geographical distance from urban centers, inadequate transportation, and limited infrastructure hinder women in rural and peri-urban areas from seeking timely assistance. The centralization of services within government offices or urban neighborhoods inadvertently excludes populations residing in remote areas. Additionally, resource limitations such as insufficient staffing, lack of professional expertise, and inadequate financial support for protection programs exacerbate the challenge of equitable access. These shortcomings reflect broader governance issues, where budgetary allocation and administrative capacity directly influence the quality and reach of protective measures (Savoia & Sen, 2015).

Cultural and societal norms form another layer of obstruction. The persistence of patriarchal values and the stigmatization of survivors create an environment in which women often hesitate to report incidents of violence (Ajmal & Rasool, 2023). Victim-blaming attitudes, fear of damaging family honor, and the pressure to maintain social harmony contribute to a culture of silence. This cultural climate not only discourages survivors from utilizing available services but also perpetuates a cycle of underreporting, thereby reinforcing the perception that formal protection systems are ineffective or irrelevant. In contexts where social stigma is pervasive, women are often compelled to prioritize community acceptance over personal safety, which severely undermines the utility of institutional support.

Psychological barriers are equally critical. Trauma, fear of retaliation, and loss of self-confidence frequently prevent women from pursuing legal or social assistance. The power dynamics between victims and perpetrators, especially in cases involving intimate partners or authority figures, amplify the sense of vulnerability. Even when services are technically available, the internalized perception of helplessness or distrust in authorities creates psychological walls

that are as formidable as structural or cultural obstacles. These individual-level barriers highlight the necessity of integrating trauma-informed approaches into the delivery of protection services.

Institutional challenges further complicate the landscape of access. Bureaucratic rigidity, lengthy administrative procedures, and inconsistent law enforcement responses reduce the effectiveness of protective policies. Cases of insensitive treatment by officials or the slow processing of complaints diminish public trust in the system. Moreover, the lack of coordination among agencies—police, health services, and social organizations—often results in fragmented responses that fail to provide comprehensive protection. The absence of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms makes it difficult to address systemic weaknesses, leaving gaps that perpetuate cycles of violence.

Technological and informational barriers also play an important role. Limited public awareness campaigns, insufficient dissemination of information, and the absence of user-friendly reporting systems mean that many women are simply unaware of their rights or the procedures for accessing assistance. Digital platforms for reporting and case tracking, while innovative, remain inaccessible to those with limited technological literacy or no internet connectivity. This digital divide underscores the need for multimodal approaches to communication that account for varying levels of access to technology.

Taken together, these barriers illustrate that accessibility is not a singular challenge but a composite of interrelated constraints. Structural inequities, cultural norms, psychological trauma, institutional inefficiencies, and informational gaps converge to create a formidable web of obstacles. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that extends beyond formal legislation. It necessitates sustained efforts to decentralize services, invest in community-based cadres, promote cultural transformation, train officials in sensitivity and trauma awareness, and ensure inclusive communication strategies. Only through such comprehensive interventions can protection services fulfill their intended role as instruments of justice, security, and dignity for women and children in Balikpapan.

From an academic perspective, the identification of these barriers reinforces the theoretical understanding that policy effectiveness cannot be measured solely by the existence of regulations or institutions. Effectiveness must be assessed in terms of practical accessibility, perceived legitimacy, and the lived realities of those most affected. In this sense, barriers to access are not merely logistical obstacles but indicators of deeper systemic shortcomings that demand critical reflection and reform in both governance and societal structures.
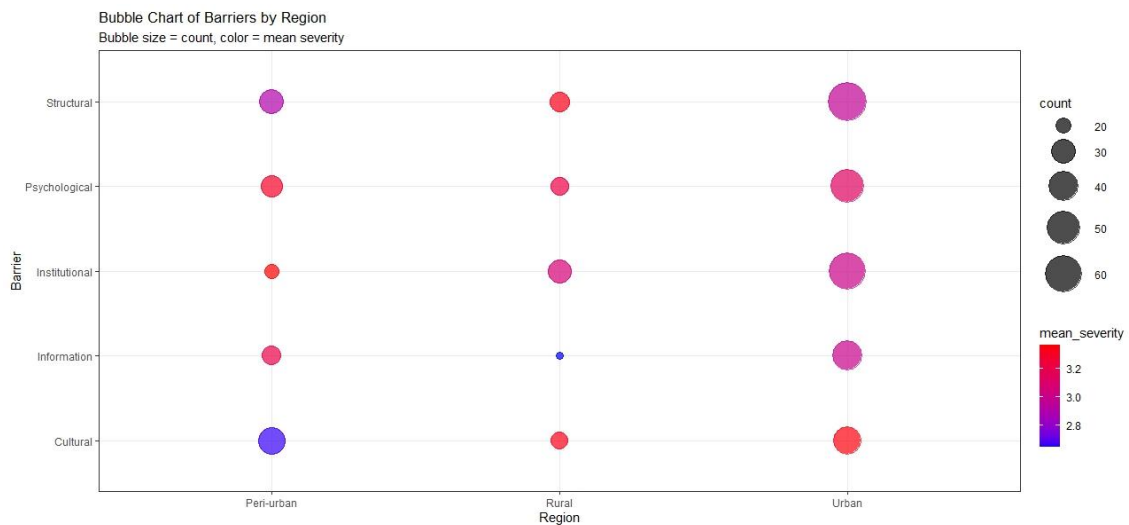
Figure 3. Analysis Chart Bubble of Barries by Region

Source: data processed by researchers

Figure 3 represents the barriers perceived by women and children in accessing protection services. Each visualization uses a different methodological lens to capture the intersection between geographic location and the severity of perceived structural, cultural, psychological, institutional, and informational barriers. Taken together, these figures not only provide descriptive statistics but also highlight important insights into the relational dynamics of policy accessibility.

The stacked diagram offers a nuanced view of the proportional distribution of barriers across different regions—urban, peri-urban, and rural. By breaking down the analysis into multiple facets for each barrier, the diagram reveals how regional variations shape the relative weight of barriers. For example, structural barriers appear more pronounced in rural areas, where distance from service centers and inadequate infrastructure limit the effectiveness of interventions. Conversely, cultural and psychological barriers show higher prevalence in peri-urban and urban areas, where social stigma and personal trauma are amplified by the density of community interactions and the persistence of patriarchal norms. The use of proportional scales ensures that attention is drawn to relative differences, rather than absolute numbers, thus aligning the analysis with comparative approaches in social research (Mattke et al., 2022).

This heatmap provides an additional layer of interpretation by plotting the average severity associated with each type of barrier across regions. This visualization translates the abstract notion of severity into a tangible gradient, with darker colors indicating greater difficulty in accessing services. This heatmap highlights the fact that structural barriers in rural areas are not only more prevalent but also more severe, suggesting that distance, limited facilities, and resource shortages act not only as logistical inconveniences but also as profound barriers to justice and security. On the other hand, institutional inefficiencies consistently emerge across all regions with moderate

severity, suggesting that bureaucratic rigidity is a systemic problem that is not limited to specific geographic spaces.

Bubble charts expand the analysis by introducing a two-axis comparison of frequency and severity. The size of the bubble indicates the number of respondents identifying a particular barrier, while the color intensity indicates the average severity. This combination allows for simultaneous interpretation of prevalence and intensity, a feature often overlooked in conventional bar charts or tables. The large, dark bubbles in the structural and cultural categories in rural areas demonstrate the combined effect of frequency and severity, a pattern that indicates women's increased vulnerability in these contexts. The smaller, darker bubbles in the institutional category highlight a more subtle yet significant insight: although fewer respondents reported institutional barriers, those who did often rated their severity high, indicating a latent crisis of institutional credibility.

These three visualizations collectively embody a comprehensive methodological strategy that goes beyond mere descriptive reporting. By integrating proportional comparisons, severity, and two-dimensional markers, they demonstrate the multifaceted nature of barriers. The academic value of these visualizations lies in their ability to represent complex realities in an easily interpretable manner, bridging the gap between quantitative simulation and qualitative interpretation. This visualization shows that access to protection services is not determined by isolated factors, but rather by the interaction of structural, cultural, psychological, and institutional conditions, each of which is reinforced or diminished by spatial and social contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, these figures validate the proposition that policy effectiveness should be evaluated not only in terms of institutional presence but also in terms of experiential accessibility. Regional disparities illustrate how geography reinforces inequalities in service provision, while variations in severity across categories of barriers underscore the subjective dimension of policy acceptance. Furthermore, the simultaneous depiction of prevalence and severity illustrates the multidimensionality of vulnerability, reminding policymakers that frequency alone is insufficient as a measure of urgency.

These figures serve as a critical analytical tool that synthesizes empirical evidence into a coherent narrative about access barriers. They emphasize that while protective frameworks may exist institutionally, their effectiveness is limited by structural inequities, cultural stigma, psychological trauma, and institutional inefficiencies. More importantly, they highlight the need for tailored and regionally context-sensitive interventions, where structural reforms in rural areas must be complemented by cultural transformation in urban areas and institutional streamlining

across all locations. Such insights are essential for advancing academic discourse and practical strategies aimed at protecting women and children from gender-based violence (Breton, 2023).

The Role of Local Government and Community in Implementing Protection Policies

The implementation of women's and children's protection policies in Balikpapan cannot be adequately understood without examining the complementary roles of local governments and community actors. Policy effectiveness does not solely depend on formal regulations; it also depends on the capacity of local governments to translate national commitments into actionable programs, as well as the active participation of communities in maintaining a protective environment. Synergy between government institutions and community-based initiatives determines whether policies remain symbolic or become transformative instruments of justice and security.

Local governments play a crucial role as regulators and facilitators in the governance of protection services. The establishment of the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for the Protection of Women and Children (UPTD PPA) is one of the most visible manifestations of this role. As an institutional mechanism, the UPTD PPA provides a range of services, including complaint handling, case management, legal aid, and temporary shelter. These services signal an effort to institutionalize protection and professionalize responses to gender-based violence. However, beyond the establishment of formal units, local governments must ensure adequate resources, consistent monitoring, and coordination with other agencies such as the police, hospitals, and social service organizations. Without these supporting measures, the existence of risk institutions is merely nominal, rather than effective.

The role of communities is equally crucial in bridging the gap between formal services and the realities of women's lives. Initiatives such as the Integrated Community-Based Women and Children Protection Center (PPATBM) and neighborhood-level cadres (PPART) illustrate how communities act as the frontline in combating violence. These actors not only provide direct support but also carry out preventative functions by raising awareness, facilitating early case detection, and encouraging cultural change in attitudes toward gender-based violence. Their close relationship with residents allows them to respond quickly and sensitively to incidents, complementing the sometimes rigid and slow processes of formal institutions.

Collaboration between local governments and community organizations is a growing form of shared governance, in which authority and responsibility are distributed among various stakeholders. This approach aligns with the principles of participatory governance and multi-level policy implementation, which emphasize inclusivity and shared accountability. Local governments provide legitimacy, legal frameworks, and resources, while community actors

provide contextual knowledge, social trust, and accessibility. This combined capacity increases the chances of achieving equitable and sustainable outcomes.

However, the relationship between government and community actors is not without challenges. In practice, resource gaps and limited training often limit the ability of community cadres to carry out their roles effectively. Similarly, bureaucratic inefficiencies within government institutions can create frustration among community activists, weakening collaboration. A persistent, hierarchical governance culture can also hinder genuine partnerships, as community contributions are sometimes downplayed in favor of top-down directives. These tensions highlight the need for local governments to adopt a facilitative rather than directive role, creating spaces where community voices are integrated into planning, decision-making, and evaluation processes.

Another important dimension is the role of communities in overcoming cultural and psychological barriers (Bantham et al., 2021; Croft et al., 2015). While the state can enact laws against gender-based violence, it is communities that shape the norms and attitudes that perpetuate or mitigate these practices. Community-led campaigns to counter stigma, dismantle victim-blaming narratives, and foster solidarity among survivors contribute significantly to the sustainability of protection efforts. These initiatives exemplify the concept of social capital, where networks of trust and reciprocity enhance resilience and reduce the isolation often experienced by victims.

From an academic perspective, the dual role of local governments and communities in implementing protection policies underscores the need to adopt a multi-actor governance framework. Such a framework recognizes that the state alone cannot guarantee comprehensive protection without mobilizing social resources at the grassroots level. Furthermore, the interplay between formal institutions and informal networks offers fertile ground for theoretical reflection on governance, citizenship, and the politics of care. This demonstrates that protection policies are not simply legal instruments but also social practices embedded in everyday interactions. The effectiveness of protection policies in Balikpapan rests on the collaborative contributions of local governments and community actors. Local governments provide the institutional framework, while communities bring these structures to life with contextual relevance and practical accessibility. Strengthening this partnership requires not only financial and technical investments but also cultural and organizational changes that value community agency. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that policies transcend the legal framework and become lived realities that protect the dignity and rights of women and children.
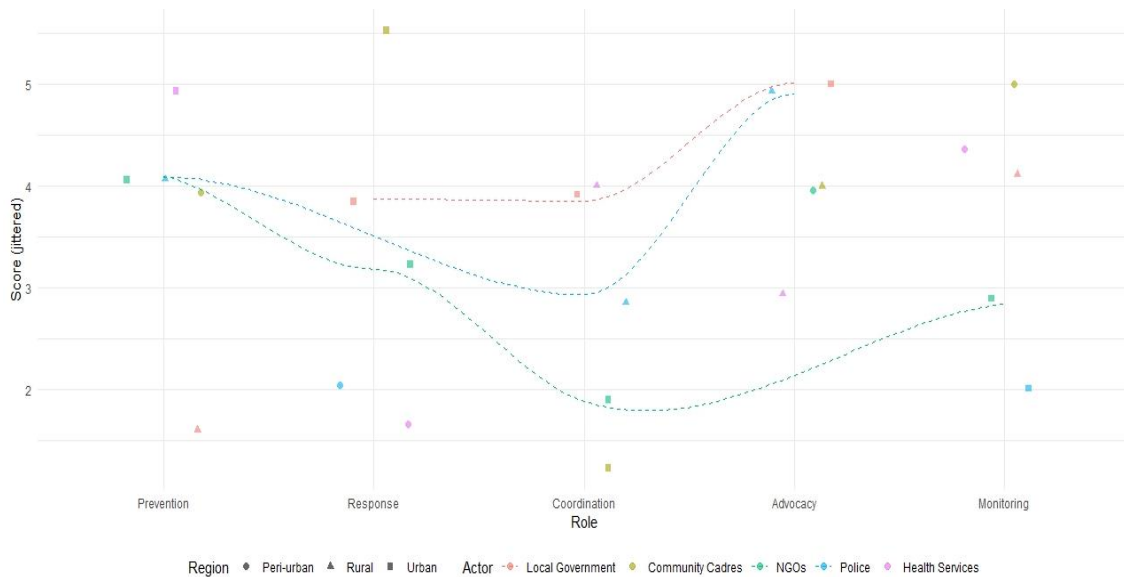
Figure 4. Analysis Adjusted Trends of Impact and Role

Source: data processed by researchers

Figure 4 presents simulated data that provides a comprehensive overview of the different roles played by local governments, community cadres, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the police, and health services in implementing policies to protect women and children. Each visualization is designed to capture a different analytical dimension: the balance of role distribution among actors, the spatial differentiation of roles across regions, and the dynamic variability of actor involvement as reflected through trend patterns. Collectively, these figures emphasize the multifaceted nature of policy implementation and the need to adopt a multi-actor governance framework in addressing gender-based violence.

A polar stacked bar chart serves as the first layer of analysis, offering a radar-like perspective on how various actors contribute to various functional domains: prevention, response, coordination, advocacy, and monitoring. This visualization highlights the cumulative nature of actor involvement, where the expansion of stacked segments signifies the relative dominance of certain actors within specific policy domains. For example, the marked expansion of local government roles in prevention and coordination underscores its institutional responsibility as both regulator and facilitator. Conversely, community leaders and NGOs emerge more prominently in advocacy roles, demonstrating their comparative advantage in mobilizing grassroots awareness and shaping public discourse. The polar arrangement of the diagram allows for an interpretation of complementarity, which illustrates that no single actor monopolizes all roles; rather, collaborative configurations are necessary to achieve policy effectiveness.

The second visualization, presented as a heatmap disaggregated by region, adds geographic depth to the analysis by examining how actor roles manifest differently in urban, suburban, and

rural contexts. The intensity of the cell gradient indicates the severity or strength of role performance, thus providing insight into regional disparities. The graph shows that structural and institutional roles tend to be more prominent in urban areas, where the concentration of government offices and service facilities allows for stronger engagement. Conversely, rural areas exhibit a higher intensity of community and NGO roles, suggesting that the absence of a direct government presence necessitates greater reliance on grassroots mechanisms. The suburban context, which falls between these two extremes, exhibits a hybrid pattern in which both formal institutions and community actors contribute, albeit with varying intensity. This regionalized analysis underscores the principle that policy implementation cannot be assumed to be uniform; rather, policy implementation is conditioned by the socio-spatial environment in which actors operate.

The third figure, which combines a scatterplot with jitter and loess smoothing, introduces a dynamic perspective on actor engagement across roles. Each point represents a specific observation, while the loess curve traces the general trend in role performance. The scatterplot of dots indicates the variability in actor involvement, while the dashed smoothing lines indicate underlying patterns across regions. This visualization captures the complexity of real-world policy implementation, where individual observations can fluctuate widely, but aggregate trends reflect systemic orientations. Overlapping trajectories among actors indicate areas of interdependence, such as shared responsibility in response roles between police and health services. At the same time, divergent curves highlight areas where actors pursue divergent strategies, such as the stronger advocacy role of NGOs compared to the government's more focused coordination role.

From an academic perspective, this triangulation of visualizations demonstrates the importance of multi-method representation in policy analysis. The polar diagram emphasizes proportional distribution, the heatmap highlights spatial inequalities, and the scatterplot smoothing plots show variability and trend direction. Overall, these figures confirm the theoretical proposition that protection policy governance is best understood as a network of interdependent roles, rather than a hierarchy dominated by a single institution. This evidence supports the notion of polycentric governance, where multiple centers of authority and responsibility coexist, each contributing to the resilience of the overall system.

These figures also raise critical reflections on policy challenges. Reliance on local governments for prevention and coordination can create obstacles if institutional capacity is weak or bureaucratic processes are slow. The concentration of community and NGO influence in advocacy highlights the ongoing need for cultural transformation at the grassroots level, a process

that requires sustained social engagement rather than short-term interventions. Furthermore, the variability observed in the scatterplots suggests that while policies may have been institutionally standardized, their implementation remains dependent on local context, actor resources, and social trust.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of women's perceptions of the effectiveness of protection policies in Balikpapan reveals a clear disjuncture between the presence of a formal regulatory framework and the lived realities of the intended beneficiaries. Although institutional mechanisms such as the UPTD PPA and community-based structures have been formally established and publicized, women's assessments remain ambivalent: many acknowledge that services exist, yet question whether they are accessible, responsive, and capable of providing meaningful protection. These findings substantiate theoretical perspectives that conceptualize perception as a process shaped not only by cognitive awareness of norms and rules, but also by contextual experiences, emotions, and social interactions (Snyder et al., 2015). They also confirm that policy effectiveness, from the standpoint of service users, is evaluated through everyday encounters with institutions—waiting times, officers' attitudes, follow-up mechanisms—rather than through knowledge of legal texts or formal mandates.

When viewed against broader theoretical and empirical literature, these findings underscore that the mere existence of a legal–institutional architecture is insufficient to guarantee protection. Studies on access to justice and GBV services in other contexts similarly show that survivors often maintain a critical distance from formal systems, perceiving them as distant, bureaucratic, or insensitive, even when robust legal frameworks are in place (Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2015; Breton, 2023). The Balikpapan case aligns with this pattern: women's perceptions of partial or limited effectiveness suggest that the regulatory framework has not yet been fully translated into practices that generate trust, a sense of safety, and tangible outcomes for those who experience violence. In this respect, the present study adopts the position that legal reform must be coupled with sustained efforts to transform institutional cultures and frontline practices if protection policies are to be experienced as credible and effective.

Barriers to accessing protection services elucidate why this translation remains incomplete. The study shows that structural constraints—such as geographic distance to service centers, limited transportation, and uneven distribution of facilities—coexist with entrenched socio-cultural norms, including victim blaming, patriarchal gender relations, and the imperative to "protect family honor." These factors significantly restrict women's agency to seek help, while psychological trauma, fear of retaliation, and anticipated stigma further undermine their

willingness to report. Institutional barriers, including complex procedures, fragmented coordination between agencies, and inconsistent law enforcement, compound these difficulties. The convergence of structural, cultural, psychological, and institutional obstacles confirms that accessibility is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to the formal availability of services. Instead, it requires a supportive ecosystem that addresses both tangible constraints (infrastructure, cost, distance) and intangible barriers (fear, stigma, mistrust) in an integrated manner (Small et al., 2017).

Comparative research similarly highlights that such multi-layered barriers are common across diverse settings, particularly where gender norms and power hierarchies remain deeply entrenched. Evidence from other regions and countries indicates that survivors frequently confront overlapping constraints—limited information, fear of disbelief, and procedural opacity—that deter them from engaging with formal services (Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2015; Messing et al., 2015; Xie & Baumer, 2019). The Balikpapan findings are therefore consistent with international patterns, while adding context-specific detail on how local socio-cultural norms and governance arrangements in Indonesia shape women's navigation of the protection system. This study accordingly argues that interventions aimed at improving service utilization must move beyond awareness-raising alone and directly confront the structural and institutional factors that reproduce underreporting and disengagement.

The role of local government and community actors emerges as a decisive determinant of whether protection policies are implemented in ways that can overcome these barriers. In Balikpapan, local government institutions supply formal mandates, resources, and organizational structures, while community-based actors—such as PPATBM and PPART cadres—contribute proximity, trust, and culturally embedded advocacy. This constellation reflects the logic of shared governance, in which responsibility for addressing complex social problems is distributed across multiple nodes rather than concentrated in a single authority (Belletti et al., 2017; Head, 2016; Howlett, 2018). The findings suggest that neither state agencies nor community actors alone are sufficient to ensure comprehensive protection; rather, their effectiveness depends on the density and quality of collaboration, information flows, and mutual accountability. Where coordination is strong and capacities are supported, women are more likely to perceive services as approachable and responsive. Where collaboration is weak, even well-designed policies may remain underutilized or be experienced as symbolic.

Synthesizing these dimensions—perceptions, barriers, and collaborative implementation—this study advances the argument that policy effectiveness must be assessed in terms of alignment between regulatory frameworks and the everyday realities of those they are meant to protect.

Women's perceptions make visible the subjective evaluation of policies, barriers reveal the objective constraints that structure access, and governance arrangements reflect the institutional architecture through which policies are enacted. The interdependence of these elements indicates that improving one dimension in isolation—for example, expanding legal provisions without reforming practices, or creating new units without addressing stigma—will yield limited gains. The author thus adopts a clear position that meaningful protection from gender-based violence requires integrated reforms that simultaneously enhance survivor-centred service delivery, reduce structural and cultural barriers, and strengthen collaborative, multi-actor governance at the local level.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, at the institutional level, local governments should prioritize capacity building for frontline personnel, emphasizing trauma-informed, gender-sensitive, and non-discriminatory practices that can foster trust and positive user experiences. Second, structural access barriers could be mitigated through decentralized service points, mobile outreach, and the strategic use of technology-based reporting and counseling platforms, while ensuring that such innovations remain inclusive for women with limited digital access. Third, targeted community interventions are needed to challenge victim-blaming norms and patriarchal attitudes, working through schools, religious institutions, and community organizations to reshape social expectations around violence and reporting. Finally, mechanisms for continuous feedback—from women service users, community actors, and civil society—should be institutionalized so that protection policies and programs can be regularly adjusted to better reflect local needs and perceptions. Together, these measures would help move GBV protection frameworks in Balikpapan beyond formal compliance and toward substantive guarantees of safety, dignity, and justice for women.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the effectiveness of gender-based violence protection policies in Balikpapan is fundamentally shaped by women's perceptions of accessibility, responsiveness, and legitimacy of existing services, in line with the research objectives. Although the establishment of mechanisms such as the UPTD PPA provides a formal institutional framework, their perceived effectiveness is constrained by intersecting structural limitations, entrenched socio-cultural stigma, and the enduring psychological impacts of violence. These multidimensional barriers reduce the likelihood that women will report incidents or fully utilize available services, thereby weakening the protective function of the policy framework. At the same time, the active engagement of local government, community cadres, and civil society

organizations highlights the potential of shared governance arrangements to enhance outreach, trust, and continuity of support.

Conceptually, the study contributes to the literature by integrating women's lived experiences, multi-layered barriers, and local governance configurations into a single analytical lens for understanding localized gender-based violence protection. Practically, it underscores the need to move beyond normative legal compliance towards inclusive, trauma-informed, and context-sensitive implementation strategies. Future research should employ longitudinal, comparative, and mixed-method designs across different regions to examine how variations in institutional capacity, community engagement, and socio-cultural contexts shape the durability and scalability of gender-based violence protection systems.

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