

Gender and Policing in Indonesia: Institutional Barriers, Representation, and Professional Development

Putri Prameswari* 

Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

putriprameswari@gmail.com

Adhistia Keisya Pamungkas 

Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

adhistia@gmail.com

Eka Adelia 

Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

eka_adelia@gmail.com

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*Corresponding Author

Abstract

Gender equality within police institutions has implications for organisational legitimacy, professional development, and the delivery of responsive public services. Although women's participation in Indonesian policing has expanded, institutional and cultural barriers may continue to affect recruitment, career progression, leadership opportunities, and workplace experiences. This study examines gender representation and professional development within Indonesian policing. Using qualitative analysis of institutional policies, regulations, academic studies, and research on women's participation in law enforcement, the study identifies structural and cultural factors affecting gender equality. These include organisational norms, leadership structures, occupational expectations, work-family pressures, and access to professional opportunities. The study argues that increasing numerical representation alone does not necessarily produce substantive gender equality. Institutional reform must also address organisational culture, leadership opportunities, career development, workplace protections, and mechanisms for preventing discrimination and harassment. The article contributes to the literature on gender and policing by examining the Indonesian experience within broader debates concerning institutional transformation and inclusive law enforcement. It provides policy implications for developing police organisations that support equal professional opportunities while strengthening institutional responsiveness to diverse community needs.

[Kesetaraan gender dalam institusi kepolisian memiliki implikasi terhadap legitimasi organisasi, pengembangan profesional, dan penyediaan layanan publik yang responsif. Meskipun partisipasi perempuan dalam kepolisian Indonesia telah meningkat, hambatan institusional dan budaya mungkin masih memengaruhi rekrutmen, jenjang karier, peluang kepemimpinan, dan pengalaman di tempat kerja. Studi ini mengkaji representasi gender dan pengembangan profesional dalam kepolisian Indonesia. Melalui analisis kualitatif terhadap kebijakan institusional, peraturan, kajian akademis, dan penelitian mengenai partisipasi perempuan dalam penegakan hukum, studi ini mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor struktural dan budaya yang memengaruhi kesetaraan gender. Faktor-faktor tersebut meliputi norma organisasi, struktur kepemimpinan, ekspektasi pekerjaan, tekanan antara pekerjaan dan keluarga, serta akses terhadap peluang profesional. Studi ini berargumen bahwa peningkatan representasi secara jumlah saja tidak serta-merta menghasilkan kesetaraan gender yang substantif. Reformasi kelembagaan juga harus menyentuh aspek budaya organisasi, peluang kepemimpinan, pengembangan karier, perlindungan di tempat kerja, serta mekanisme pencegahan diskriminasi dan pelecehan. Artikel ini memberikan kontribusi pada literatur mengenai gender dan kepolisian dengan menelaah pengalaman Indonesia dalam konteks perdebatan yang lebih luas tentang transformasi kelembagaan dan penegakan hukum yang inklusif. Studi ini menyajikan implikasi kebijakan bagi pengembangan organisasi kepolisian yang mendukung kesetaraan peluang profesional sekaligus memperkuat responsivitas institusi terhadap beragam kebutuhan masyarakat.]

Keywords: gender and policing, women in police, gender equality, police organisation, Indonesia

Introduction

Policing occupies a distinctive position within the modern state because police organisations simultaneously exercise coercive authority, provide public services, enforce criminal law, maintain public order, and interact directly with citizens whose social positions and experiences are highly diverse. The institutional character of policing therefore has consequences extending beyond internal personnel management. The composition, culture, and professional practices of police organisations influence how authority is exercised and how different social groups experience the state in everyday encounters. Gender is particularly important in this context because policing has historically developed around organisational models associated with masculine occupational norms, physical authority, hierarchical discipline, and operational availability. The incorporation of women into police institutions consequently raises questions that cannot be reduced to whether women are formally permitted to enter the profession. It also concerns whether organisational structures allow women to obtain equivalent

professional opportunities, exercise authority, access strategic assignments, and develop long-term careers on substantively equal terms (UN Women 2022; UN Police 2025).

The Indonesian National Police, or Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia (Polri), provides an important institutional setting for examining these questions because the organisation operates within a broader national framework that formally recognises gender mainstreaming as a component of public administration. Indonesia's Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 requires gender mainstreaming to be incorporated into planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation across government institutions. The policy consequently establishes a formal basis for considering gender not as a specialised women's issue but as an institutional dimension of governance (Republic of Indonesia 2000). At the same time, the legal framework governing the police defines Polri as a public institution with responsibilities encompassing security, law enforcement, protection, service, and community engagement. This combination is significant because gender equality within policing must be evaluated against both employment principles and the police organisation's responsibility to provide responsive public services (Republic of Indonesia 2002).

The distinction between formal equality and substantive equality is therefore central to understanding women's position in policing. Formal equality concerns whether women possess the same legal entitlement to enter, remain within, and advance through an institution. Substantive equality asks whether apparently neutral organisational arrangements produce comparable opportunities and outcomes for women and men in practice. A recruitment system may formally allow women to compete with men while occupational expectations, assignment practices, informal networks, family-role assumptions, or perceptions of physical capability influence who receives operational experience and who is considered suitable for leadership. In this sense, equality cannot be assessed exclusively through the existence of non-discriminatory rules. It requires attention to the organisational processes that translate formal rules into professional careers. Research on policewomen internationally has repeatedly identified organisational culture, gendered expectations, resource distribution, and workplace injustice as important dimensions of women's professional experiences (Kong 2019; Mac The significance of this finding lies in its demonstration that institutional equality can coexist with contextual barriers. If a position is formally open to women but organisational expectations make access to that position substantially more difficult (Donald et al. 2024).

The Indonesian case illustrates this tension between institutional reform and organisational continuity. Publicly available statements from Indonesian police leadership have acknowledged that female officers continue to encounter stereotypes, gendered task divisions, and expectations that they simultaneously fulfil professional and domestic roles. In 2024, the Indonesian National Police publicly stated that women represented approximately 5.6 percent of the total

police force and acknowledged that female officers could encounter limitations associated with perceptions that administrative work was more appropriate for them (Indonesian National Police 2024a). This institutional acknowledgement is analytically important because it indicates that gender inequality cannot simply be interpreted as an external criticism of the organisation. Some of the barriers discussed in academic research are also recognised within institutional discourse itself. The analytical problem consequently shifts from identifying whether barriers exist to understanding how they are reproduced, contested, and potentially transformed within police organisational structures.

Representation is particularly important because police organisations perform both symbolic and operational functions. The presence of women in policing can communicate that coercive authority, professional expertise, and public leadership are not exclusively masculine domains. Yet representation becomes institutionally meaningful only when women occupy diverse occupational roles and have access to authority rather than being concentrated in positions culturally associated with femininity. The Indonesian National Police reported in 2024 that five women officers had attained the rank of brigadier general and occupied strategic positions, while women officers were also participating in international peacekeeping activities (Indonesian National Police 2024b). Such developments demonstrate that women's participation has expanded beyond a purely symbolic presence. Nevertheless, isolated examples of senior female officers do not by themselves establish whether career structures as a whole have become gender equitable. Representation must therefore be examined horizontally across functions and vertically across organisational hierarchies.

This distinction is reinforced by research concerning the placement of Indonesian policewomen in leadership positions. Siregar, Nurdin, and Rivai's study of gender mainstreaming within the Jakarta Metropolitan Police examined the placement of female officers as sector police chiefs and found that women could formally occupy leadership positions without a formal distinction in eligibility between male and female officers. However, the study also identified social and organisational conditions that complicated the implementation of gender mainstreaming, including perceptions concerning women's domestic responsibilities and the demanding operational requirements of police leadership (Siregar, Nurdin, and Rivai 2023). The significance of this finding lies in its demonstration that institutional equality can coexist with contextual barriers. If a position is formally open to women but organisational expectations make access to that position substantially more difficult, formal equality remains incomplete as a description of professional opportunity.

The problem is consequently not simply that women are underrepresented in policing. The deeper issue concerns the mechanisms through which representation is translated into organisational power, professional development, and institutional influence. Recruitment determines who enters the institution, but career development determines who acquires specialised knowledge, operational

credibility, supervisory experience, command authority, and access to decision-making networks. Promotion systems similarly do more than distribute rank; they determine whose professional trajectories become institutionally visible and whose expertise is considered relevant to strategic leadership. Consequently, a gender-sensitive analysis of policing must examine the entire professional lifecycle rather than treating recruitment as the principal indicator of equality. This approach is consistent with international approaches to gender-responsive policing, which increasingly connect institutional change, capacity development, gender-responsive leadership, and service delivery rather than treating women's recruitment as an isolated objective (UN Women 2025).

Professional development is particularly important because policing is an experience-intensive occupation. Career advancement frequently depends not only on formal qualifications but also on access to assignments that allow officers to demonstrate competence, manage complex cases, develop networks, and obtain leadership experience. If women are disproportionately directed toward administrative, supportive, or stereotypically feminised functions, they may accumulate different forms of professional capital from their male colleagues. Such differentiation can subsequently become self-reinforcing: officers who receive fewer opportunities to command complex operational units may later appear to possess less operational experience, while those who receive such opportunities accumulate credentials that support future promotion. The resulting disparity can therefore appear as an outcome of merit-based selection even when the underlying distribution of developmental opportunities has been gendered. International research on female police officers similarly identifies resource deprivation, organisational backlash, tokenism, and restricted access to career-supporting opportunities as recurring dimensions of organisational injustice (MacDonald et al. 2024).

Gender equality also has implications for police responsiveness toward citizens. The police routinely encounter victims, suspects, witnesses, families, and vulnerable groups in circumstances where gender can affect communication, privacy, safety, and access to justice. International policing frameworks therefore emphasise female officers' participation not merely as an employment objective but as part of an operational capacity to address differentiated security needs and engage communities (UN Police 2025). In Indonesia, this dimension has been reflected institutionally through specialised arrangements for women and children. The establishment of the Directorate for the Protection of Women and Children under Presidential Regulation No. 54 of 2022 illustrates an organisational recognition that certain forms of violence and victimisation require specialised police capacity (UN Women 2024). UN Women Data Hub Women's representation is therefore connected to questions of institutional capacity, although representation should not be treated as automatically guaranteeing gender-responsive policing.

The relationship between internal gender equality and external service responsiveness is especially visible in Indonesia's evolving response to violence against women. Cooperation between the Indonesian National Police and the National Commission on Violence Against Women has included institutional mechanisms addressing women in conflict with the law and approaches intended to strengthen victim-centred responses (UN Women 2024). Indonesia has also adopted Law No. 12 of 2022 concerning sexual violence, which establishes legal provisions addressing various forms of sexual violence and victim protection. These developments create an institutional environment in which police capacity is increasingly expected to respond to gendered forms of victimisation. The organisational implication is that gender competence must exist not only among specialised units but across police professional development more broadly. A police institution cannot consistently deliver gender-responsive services if gender sensitivity is confined to a small number of specialised officers or departments.

Against this background, this article examines gender and policing in Indonesia through three interconnected dimensions: institutional barriers, representation, and professional development. Institutional barriers refer to formal and informal organisational arrangements that may shape women's access to recruitment, assignments, promotion, leadership, and workplace resources. Representation refers not only to women's numerical presence but also to their distribution across occupational functions, ranks, and decision-making positions. Professional development refers to the opportunities through which officers acquire operational experience, specialised competence, leadership credentials, and career advancement. These dimensions are analytically interdependent. Representation without professional development may produce numerical inclusion without institutional influence, while professional development without organisational reform may leave women dependent upon informal mechanisms that reproduce existing hierarchies. The central argument developed in this article is therefore that understandings of policing frequently associate effective police work with characteristics such as physical strength, emotional control, occupational availability, risk-taking, and command authority, which have historically been culturally coded as masculine. Such associations can become embedded in recruitment criteria, occupational cultures, informal expectations, and assumptions about leadership. The problem is not that these dimensions are inherently inappropriate for policing, but that their gendered interpretation can establish a hierarchy in which masculine-coded behaviour is treated as the default model of professional competence.

Women's professional legitimacy may consequently require them to demonstrate competence within an institutional culture encompasses shared assumptions about appropriate behaviour, occupational identity, authority, competence, loyalty, and belonging. In a gendered organisation, these assumptions may influence how personnel interpret the capabilities and professional identities of women and men. Research on female police officers has demonstrated that

organisational culture can shape organisational commitment and workplace experiences, suggesting that institutional outcomes depend not only on formal policies but also on how organisational work, community relations, victim assistance, or work involving women and children, while men are presumed more suitable for tactical, investigative, command, or high-risk operational functions. Such differentiation can appear benign because it may be justified through assumptions about women's communication skills or social sensitivity. However, when certain assignments provide greater visibility, authority, operational experience, or promotion opportunities, apparently complementary be especially consequential because promotion can depend upon accumulated operational experience and institutional relationships. Consequently, gender inequality at senior levels may reflect disparities that developed much earlier in officers' careers. Examining work is often characterised by irregular hours, emergency availability, geographical mobility, shift work, and high demands for organisational commitment.

These conditions can interact with social expectations concerning women's responsibility for domestic and caregiving work. The result is not necessarily a formal rule excluding women, but a structural tension in which career advancement may require patterns of availability that are easier to reconcile with traditional gender arrangements for some officers than for others. The Indonesian literature has identified domestic expectations as a factor influencing perceptions of policewomen's gender equality in policing should be conceptualised as a process of institutional transformation rather than simply an increase in the number of women entering the police force.

Literature Review

A. Gender, Police Organisations, and Institutional Transformation

The literature on gender and policing has increasingly moved beyond the question of whether women can perform police work toward a broader examination of how police institutions themselves are gendered. Traditional understandings of policing frequently associate effective police work with characteristics such as physical strength, emotional control, occupational availability, risk-taking, and command authority, which have historically been culturally coded as masculine. Such associations can become embedded in recruitment criteria, occupational cultures, informal expectations, and assumptions about leadership. The problem is not that these dimensions are inherently inappropriate for policing, but that their gendered interpretation can establish a hierarchy in which masculine-coded behaviour is treated as the default model of professional competence. Women's professional legitimacy may consequently require them to demonstrate competence within an institutional culture whose standards were historically constructed around male occupational experience.

Organisational culture is consequently a critical analytical concept because formal regulations do not exhaust the rules through which police work is organised.

Culture encompasses shared assumptions about appropriate behaviour, occupational identity, authority, competence, loyalty, and belonging. In a gendered organisation, these assumptions may influence how personnel interpret the capabilities and professional identities of women and men. Research on female police officers has demonstrated that organisational culture can shape organisational commitment and workplace experiences, suggesting that institutional outcomes depend not only on formal policies but also on how organisational members interpret and reproduce those policies (Kong 2019). This perspective is particularly relevant to Indonesia because formal gender-mainstreaming commitments coexist with occupational expectations that may continue to distinguish between supposedly appropriate roles for male and female officers.

A central manifestation of gendered organisational culture is occupational segmentation. Occupational segmentation occurs when workers are concentrated in particular roles according to gender rather than solely according to demonstrated competence, qualifications, or organisational need. Within policing, segmentation can take the form of assumptions that women are especially appropriate for administrative work, community relations, victim assistance, or work involving women and children, while men are presumed more suitable for tactical, investigative, command, or high-risk operational functions. Such differentiation can appear benign because it may be justified through assumptions about women's communication skills or social sensitivity. However, when certain assignments provide greater visibility, authority, operational experience, or promotion opportunities, apparently complementary occupational roles can generate unequal career consequences. The Indonesian evidence concerning gendered task divisions is therefore significant because it connects cultural assumptions directly to the distribution of professional opportunities (Indonesian National Police 2024a).

The concept of the glass ceiling is also useful, although it should be applied carefully. A glass ceiling does not simply refer to a small number of women in senior positions. It describes organisational processes through which women's advancement becomes systematically more difficult even when explicit formal restrictions are absent. Such processes may involve informal networks, differential access to mentoring, assumptions about family responsibilities, uneven distribution of developmental assignments, or standards of leadership that privilege established masculine organisational patterns. In policing, these dynamics may be especially consequential because promotion can depend upon accumulated operational experience and institutional relationships. Consequently, gender inequality at senior levels may reflect disparities that developed much earlier in officers' careers. Examining senior representation without examining the career pathways leading toward senior positions risks interpreting the outcome without analysing the organisational mechanisms that produced it.

The work–family relationship represents another dimension of professional inequality. Police work is often characterised by irregular hours, emergency

availability, geographical mobility, shift work, and high demands for organisational commitment. These conditions can interact with social expectations concerning women's responsibility for domestic and caregiving work. The result is not necessarily a formal rule excluding women, but a structural tension in which career advancement may require patterns of availability that are easier to reconcile with traditional gender arrangements for some officers than for others. The Indonesian literature has identified domestic expectations as a factor influencing perceptions of policewomen's careers, while international research has documented how reproductive and caregiving experiences can intersect with organisational injustice among female police officers (Siregar, Nurdin, and Rivai 2023; MacDonald et al. 2024).

This issue demonstrates why organisational equality cannot be reduced to identical treatment in every circumstance. Identical treatment can reproduce inequality when institutional structures have been designed around assumptions that do not account for differentiated social responsibilities. Gender-responsive institutional design instead asks whether not be treated solely as beneficiaries of gender reform. Policewomen are also institutional actors who can influence policing practices, organisational knowledge, and public engagement. The United Nations has highlighted women's participation in The Indonesian experience of female officers participating in international peacekeeping likewise demonstrates that policewomen can occupy professional roles extending well beyond administrative or supportive functions. The recognition of Indonesian officer Renita R. First, women are employees and public officials entitled to fair professional treatment. Second, policewomen participate in delivering public authority to communities with gender-differentiated experiences of crime, violence-support mechanisms.

Nevertheless, specialisation also creates a potential institutional dilemma. If gender-responsive policing becomes identified exclusively with specialist units, gender sensitivity may remain peripheral to mainstream police education and organisational culture, interact with victims, and coordinate with other service providers. A gender-responsive police organisation therefore requires institutional capacity to translate legal reforms into everyday professional practice. measure of institutional transformation. A police force could increase the number of women while maintaining gendered occupational segmentation, unequal access to specialised assignments, limited representation in command positions, and workplace cultures that treat women as exceptions. The Indonesian experience illustrates why representation must be disaggregated by rank, function, assignment, leadership responsibility, and career stage. The reported presence of women at brigadier-general level and in strategic positions demonstrates progress in vertical representation, but the broader figure of approximately 5.6 percent female of legitimate authority can become less exclusively associated with masculinity. This may be particularly relevant in interactions involving women and children, victims of sexual violence, and other circumstances where privacy and interpersonal to

education, specialised training, challenging assignments, mentoring, performance recognition, supervisory experience, and opportunities to compete for promotion. If women receive fewer opportunities in these areas, their lower representation in senior positions may emerge through cumulative organisational processes rather than explicit discrimination.

This cumulative perspective is especially useful in policing because career advancement is often sequential: operational experience supports promotion, promotion provides access to leadership, and leadership experience subsequently strengthens eligibility for higher command. A gendered allocation of early-career opportunities can therefore generate long-term consequences even when later promotion procedures appear neutral practices, and documented representations of policewomen. The study analyses legislation and regulations governing the police and gender mainstreaming, official Indonesian National Police publications, international policy documents, and academic studies concerning women in policing and organisational gender dynamics. The source selection is deliberately restricted to materials published or legally enacted no later than 2025 in order to maintain temporal consistency with the study's evidentiary framework. The approach does not claim to measure the individual experiences of all Indonesian policewomen. Instead, it seeks to identify institutional patterns and analytical tensions visible across the conceptual basis for examining how apparently neutral structures can interact with gendered expectations and produce differentiated professional opportunities.

The analysis therefore treats recruitment, deployment, training, promotion, leadership, and workplace conditions as interconnected stages of an organisational process. This framework avoids equating the presence of women with substantive equality and instead asks how gender is embedded in the distribution of professional resources and authority. The framework also recognises that institutional change may be uneven: formal policies may change more rapidly than organisational culture, while individual women development. Institutional barriers encompass formal and informal rules, cultural expectations, occupational stereotypes, work-family assumptions, and organisational arrangements that may influence women's access to professional opportunities. Representation encompasses both numerical participation and distribution across ranks, functions, leadership positions, and specialised areas. Professional development encompasses education, training, operational assignments, mentoring, promotion, leadership opportunities, and access to career-enhancing institutional resources.

These categories are treated as mutually reinforcing rather than independent variables. For example, a gendered assignment pattern may affect professional development, which may subsequently influence representation at senior levels. Similarly, limited representation in leadership may reduce women's access to institutional decision-making, thereby affecting the capacity of gender-equality provide comparable legal eligibility or prohibit explicit discrimination. Substantive equality is examined through the distribution of opportunities and institutional

resources in practice. This distinction is supported by international approaches to gender-responsive policing, which conceptualise institutional change as involving leadership, capacity strengthening, organisational reform, and responsive service delivery rather than recruitment alone practice directly causes a particular career outcome among Indonesian policewomen. Instead, it identifies patterns documented across institutional and scholarly sources and interprets their implications for organisational transformation. This methodological position is important because available public data do not necessarily provide sufficiently disaggregated information concerning recruitment, assignment, promotion, training access, and career progression across the entire Indonesian National Police. A cautious documentary approach avoids presenting isolated institutional examples as comprehensive statistical evidence.

At the same time, convergence between official institutional statements, academic studies, Indonesian policy frameworks, and international policing literature provides a basis for organisational systems enable personnel with different social circumstances to participate meaningfully and develop professionally. This does not imply lowering professional standards or replacing competence with gender identity. Rather, it requires examination of whether apparently neutral procedures distribute developmental opportunities equitably. For police organisations, the distinction is particularly relevant because professional competence itself is accumulated through assignments, training, mentoring, and exposure to different forms of policing. Equality therefore requires not only equal access to formal competitions but also equitable access to the experiences that make successful competition possible.

The organisational transformation perspective further suggests that women should not be treated solely as beneficiaries of gender reform. Policewomen are also institutional actors who can influence policing practices, organisational knowledge, and public engagement. The United Nations has highlighted women's participation in policing as relevant to leadership, investigations, community-oriented policing, capacity building, and engagement with communities (UN Police 2025). The Indonesian experience of female officers participating in international peacekeeping likewise demonstrates that policewomen can occupy professional roles extending well beyond administrative or supportive functions. The recognition of Indonesian officer Renita Rismayanti as the 2023 United Nations Woman Police Officer of the Year illustrates how Indonesian policewomen can contribute to international policing and community confidence while operating within traditionally male-dominated professional environments (United Nations in Indonesia 2023).

B. Institutional and Policy Context in Indonesia

Indonesia's formal gender-mainstreaming framework provides an important institutional foundation for analysing gender equality within policing. Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 requires government institutions to integrate gender

perspectives into policy planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Its significance is broader than the creation of women-specific programmes because gender mainstreaming is designed as a strategy for incorporating gender analysis into ordinary institutional decision-making (Republic of Indonesia 2000). For a police organisation, this implies that gender should be considered across recruitment, human-resource management, training, deployment, promotion, budgeting, leadership, operational procedures, and evaluation. Gender mainstreaming therefore offers a framework through which Polri can be assessed not merely on whether it employs women but on whether its institutional systems systematically identify and address gendered consequences.

The legal basis of Polri further establishes the organisation as a public institution whose responsibilities extend beyond crime control. Law No. 2 of 2002 defines the National Police's institutional functions and provides the statutory framework for its role in maintaining security and public order, enforcing the law, and providing protection, shelter, and services to the community (Republic of Indonesia 2002). This legal orientation matters because gender equality within the police has a dual character. First, women are employees and public officials entitled to fair professional treatment. Second, policewomen participate in delivering public authority to communities with gender-differentiated experiences of crime, violence, vulnerability, and access to justice. The internal and external dimensions of gender equality should therefore be analysed together rather than treated as unrelated administrative and service-delivery questions.

The policy environment also demonstrates a gradual movement toward specialised institutional responses to gender-based violence. The establishment of a dedicated Directorate for the Protection of Women and Children in 2022 represents an important development in the institutional architecture of Indonesian policing (UN Women 2024). UN Women Data Hub Specialisation can strengthen professional expertise by concentrating resources, training, investigative capacity, and victim-support mechanisms. Nevertheless, specialisation also creates a potential institutional dilemma. If gender-responsive policing becomes identified exclusively with specialist units, gender sensitivity may remain peripheral to mainstream police education and organisational culture. A comprehensive approach therefore requires specialised expertise while simultaneously integrating gender competence across the broader organisation. The development of gender-responsive investigation training by UN Women and UNODC similarly emphasises that law-enforcement capacity requires systematic training rather than reliance solely upon individual officers' personal awareness (UN Women and UNODC 2022).

The institutionalisation of gender-responsive policing must also be understood within Indonesia's wider legal response to violence against women. Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence provides a significant legal framework addressing forms of sexual violence and victim protection, while Indonesia's policy architecture has increasingly emphasised coordination among law enforcement, health, social, and

justice institutions (UN Women 2024). These developments increase expectations concerning the professional competence of police officers who receive reports, conduct investigations, interact with victims, and coordinate with other service providers. A gender-responsive police organisation therefore requires institutional capacity to translate legal reforms into everyday professional practice. Training, supervision, procedural guidance, data collection, and accountability mechanisms become as important as the formal existence of legislation.

At the same time, institutional progress should not be interpreted as evidence that structural barriers have disappeared. The Indonesian National Police's own public discussion of gender stereotypes in 2024 indicates that organisational transformation remains incomplete. The police chief described gendered task divisions and double standards affecting women officers and noted that female officers could be perceived primarily as suitable for administrative responsibilities (Indonesian National Police 2024a). This institutional statement is especially relevant because it illustrates the distinction between policy commitment and organisational practice. The existence of women in professional positions demonstrates institutional openness, but acknowledgement of persistent stereotypes demonstrates that organisational norms can remain resistant to formal change. The analytical task is therefore to understand the mechanisms connecting institutional policy with everyday professional experience.

C. Representation Beyond Numerical Inclusion

Numerical representation is an essential starting point for gender equality because a police organisation cannot claim full inclusiveness while women remain systematically excluded from membership. However, numerical representation is an incomplete measure of institutional transformation. A police force could increase the number of women while maintaining gendered occupational segmentation, unequal access to specialised assignments, limited representation in command positions, and workplace cultures that treat women as exceptions. The Indonesian experience illustrates why representation must be disaggregated by rank, function, assignment, leadership responsibility, and career stage. The reported presence of women at brigadier-general level and in strategic positions demonstrates progress in vertical representation, but the broader figure of approximately 5.6 percent female personnel in 2024 indicates that women remained a relatively small proportion of the overall police workforce (Indonesian National Police 2024a, 2024b).

Representation also has a symbolic dimension that affects organisational legitimacy. When citizens observe women exercising police authority, the institution's image of legitimate authority can become less exclusively associated with masculinity. This may be particularly relevant in interactions involving women and children, victims of sexual violence, and other circumstances where privacy and interpersonal trust are important. Nevertheless, symbolic representation becomes problematic when women officers are valued primarily because they

symbolise femininity rather than because they are recognised as full professional authorities. The distinction is subtle but important: an organisation may celebrate policewomen publicly while still assigning them disproportionately to roles that fit gender stereotypes. Gender equality therefore requires moving from representational visibility toward institutional authority, professional autonomy, and equal access to organisational resources.

The career-development dimension provides a more rigorous means of assessing whether representation is substantive. An officer's professional trajectory is shaped by access to education, specialised training, challenging assignments, mentoring, performance recognition, supervisory experience, and opportunities to compete for promotion. If women receive fewer opportunities in these areas, their lower representation in senior positions may emerge through cumulative organisational processes rather than explicit discrimination. This cumulative perspective is especially useful in policing because career advancement is often sequential: operational experience supports promotion, promotion provides access to leadership, and leadership experience subsequently strengthens eligibility for higher command. A gendered allocation of early-career opportunities can therefore generate long-term consequences even when later promotion procedures appear neutral.

The Indonesian National Police's 2023 initiative to open bidding for senior leadership positions for female officers demonstrates an institutional recognition of the importance of leadership pathways. The initiative was presented as part of an effort to broaden career opportunities and support gender parity in senior positions (Indonesian National Police 2023). Such mechanisms may contribute to transparency because open competition can reduce dependence on informal selection practices. However, their effectiveness depends on whether women have previously obtained the professional experiences required to compete successfully for senior positions. Open competition is therefore most meaningful when accompanied by equitable access to developmental assignments, training, mentoring, and operational leadership throughout the career lifecycle.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative documentary research design to examine gender representation and professional development within Indonesian policing. Documentary analysis is appropriate because the research question concerns the relationship between formal institutional frameworks, organisational practices, and documented representations of policewomen. The study analyses legislation and regulations governing the police and gender mainstreaming, official Indonesian National Police publications, international policy documents, and academic studies concerning women in policing and organisational gender dynamics. The source selection is deliberately restricted to materials published or legally enacted in order to maintain temporal consistency with the study's evidentiary framework. The approach does not claim to measure the individual experiences of all

Indonesian policewomen. Instead, it seeks to identify institutional patterns and analytical tensions visible across authoritative documents and relevant scholarship.

The analytical framework combines institutional analysis with gender and organisational theory. Institutional analysis is used to distinguish formal rules from organisational practices and outcomes. Gender and organisational theory provides the conceptual basis for examining how apparently neutral structures can interact with gendered expectations and produce differentiated professional opportunities. The analysis therefore treats recruitment, deployment, training, promotion, leadership, and workplace conditions as interconnected stages of an organisational process. This framework avoids equating the presence of women with substantive equality and instead asks how gender is embedded in the distribution of professional resources and authority. The framework also recognises that institutional change may be uneven: formal policies may change more rapidly than organisational culture, while individual women may develop strategies for navigating institutional constraints without those strategies necessarily transforming the structures that produced the constraints.

The documentary evidence is interpreted through three analytical categories: institutional barriers, representation, and professional development. Institutional barriers encompass formal and informal rules, cultural expectations, occupational stereotypes, work–family assumptions, and organisational arrangements that may influence women's access to professional opportunities. Representation encompasses both numerical participation and distribution across ranks, functions, leadership positions, and specialised areas. Professional development encompasses education, training, operational assignments, mentoring, promotion, leadership opportunities, and access to career-enhancing institutional resources. These categories are treated as mutually reinforcing rather than independent variables. For example, a gendered assignment pattern may affect professional development, which may subsequently influence representation at senior levels. Similarly, limited representation in leadership may reduce women's access to institutional decision-making, thereby affecting the capacity of gender-equality reforms to become embedded in organisational policy.

The study also applies a distinction between formal equality and substantive equality as an interpretive principle. Formal equality is identified where rules provide comparable legal eligibility or prohibit explicit discrimination. Substantive equality is examined through the distribution of opportunities and institutional resources in practice. This distinction is supported by international approaches to gender-responsive policing, which conceptualise institutional change as involving leadership, capacity strengthening, organisational reform, and responsive service delivery rather than recruitment alone (UN Women 2025). The approach is particularly relevant to Indonesia because the country's gender-mainstreaming framework explicitly requires gender perspectives to be integrated into policy processes. The analytical question is therefore not simply whether gender equality

is formally recognised, but whether such recognition has consequences for how police careers and professional authority are organised.

The study's contribution is consequently interpretive and analytical rather than statistically causal. It does not seek to establish that a particular organisational practice directly causes a particular career outcome among Indonesian policewomen. Instead, it identifies patterns documented across institutional and scholarly sources and interprets their implications for organisational transformation. This methodological position is important because available public data do not necessarily provide sufficiently disaggregated information concerning recruitment, assignment, promotion, training access, and career progression across the entire Indonesian National Police. A cautious documentary approach avoids presenting isolated institutional examples as comprehensive statistical evidence. At the same time, convergence between official institutional statements, academic studies, Indonesian policy frameworks, and international policing literature provides a basis for identifying recurring analytical themes.

Analysis and Discussion

A. Gendered Police Culture and the Persistence of Masculine Organisational Norms

Understanding gender inequality in policing requires attention to the historical construction of policing as a predominantly masculine occupation. Police organisations have traditionally emphasised authority, physical capability, occupational risk, discipline, hierarchy, and operational availability, characteristics that have often been culturally associated with masculinity. Although these characteristics may remain relevant to particular forms of police work, their historical association with male occupational identity can influence institutional perceptions of who appears naturally suited to policing. Consequently, women entering police institutions may encounter an organisational environment in which they are formally recognised as officers while simultaneously being evaluated against professional expectations developed within a male-dominated occupational culture. Contemporary research continues to show that women working in policing can experience organisational cultures in which traditional masculine norms remain influential, particularly in leadership and specialist operational environments (Rabe-Hemp 2024). The persistence of these norms means that gender equality cannot be understood solely through formal access to the occupation.

Police culture is particularly significant because organisational norms are reproduced through everyday interactions rather than only through written regulations. Officers learn what constitutes competent policing through informal socialisation, professional storytelling, peer interaction, supervisory expectations, and occupational routines. Within a strongly masculinised environment, professional competence may therefore become associated with behavioural characteristics traditionally regarded as masculine, while women may be expected

to demonstrate both conventional police competence and conformity to gendered expectations concerning femininity. Research examining women working in male-dominated police positions indicates that occupational culture, organisational expectations, and assignment characteristics interact to shape women's professional experiences (Rabe-Hemp 2024). The resulting pressure can create a paradox in which women are expected to demonstrate that they can perform the same work as men while simultaneously being judged according to expectations that distinguish them from men.

The Indonesian context provides evidence that such gendered occupational assumptions remain relevant. In 2024, the Indonesian National Police Chief publicly acknowledged that female officers continued to encounter stereotypes and discrimination, including a division of tasks according to perceptions of which duties were appropriate for men and which were appropriate for women. He further identified the perception that women were more suitable for administrative responsibilities and noted the existence of double standards connected to expectations that women simultaneously perform professional and domestic roles (Indonesian National Police 2024a). This acknowledgement is analytically important because it demonstrates that gendered organisational assumptions are not merely historical characteristics of policing. They remain sufficiently visible within contemporary institutional discourse to become an explicit subject of organisational reform. The challenge is consequently to transform the organisational meaning attached to particular roles rather than merely increase the number of women entering the institution.

Gendered police culture can also influence the meaning attached to women's bodies and professional identities. Women officers may be viewed simultaneously as police professionals and as women whose presence is interpreted through social expectations about femininity. This dual positioning can create pressures concerning appearance, behaviour, emotional expression, interpersonal conduct, and occupational roles. The result is a form of professional visibility in which women's actions may attract greater gendered interpretation than equivalent actions by men. Such dynamics are important because organisational legitimacy is partly constructed through perceptions of professional competence. When women must continually negotiate gendered expectations in order to establish professional credibility, the organisational costs of participation become unequally distributed. Gender equality therefore requires changing the institutional standards through which competence is interpreted, not simply providing women with permission to operate within existing standards.

The persistence of masculine organisational norms does not mean that all male officers oppose gender equality or that all women experience policing in the same way. Such generalisations would obscure the complexity of organisational cultures and individual agency. Rather, the relevant argument is that institutions can reproduce gendered expectations without individual actors consciously intending to discriminate. A supervisor may assign a female officer to a particular

function because the officer is perceived as communicative or empathetic, while a male officer may be assigned to a tactical function because he is perceived as physically capable. If the first assignment offers less access to command experience, however, the apparently positive assumption about women's interpersonal skills can generate an unequal career consequence. Institutional gender inequality can therefore emerge through ordinary decisions that appear individually reasonable but produce patterned outcomes when repeated across an organisation.

B. Occupational Segregation and the Distribution of Professional Opportunities

Occupational segregation represents one of the most important mechanisms through which gender differences can persist within police institutions. In its vertical form, segregation concerns unequal representation across ranks and leadership positions. In its horizontal form, it concerns concentration within particular occupational functions or units. Both dimensions matter because police organisations contain multiple professional pathways, and not all pathways provide equivalent opportunities for developing organisational influence. Investigative work, specialised operations, field command, strategic planning, international assignments, and leadership positions may provide different forms of professional capital. If women are disproportionately concentrated in functions perceived as administrative or supportive, numerical inclusion may coexist with substantial inequality in the accumulation of career-enhancing experience.

Research on female police officers has repeatedly identified the importance of deployment and assignment patterns for career trajectories. Miles-Johnson and Fay (2023), examining recruitment, deployment, promotion, and attrition, emphasise that these processes should be considered collectively because each stage can influence subsequent organisational outcomes. Their analysis is relevant to Indonesia because recruitment statistics alone cannot reveal whether women receive comparable opportunities after entering the police profession. A woman may successfully pass recruitment, complete police education, and enter the organisation while subsequently encountering assignment practices that affect her access to promotion-supporting experience. The analytical focus must therefore shift from entry into the organisation toward the institutional distribution of opportunities after entry.

The Indonesian literature provides a directly relevant example. Siregar, Nurdin, and Rivai (2023) examined the implementation of gender mainstreaming through the placement of female officers as sector police chiefs in the Metro Jaya Police. Their study identified a social context in which women could still be perceived as primarily responsible for domestic responsibilities and in which policewomen had historically been viewed as complementary personnel concentrated in staff, secretarial, and administrative functions. The significance of this finding lies in its connection between social gender norms and police human-resource practices. If women are culturally constructed as less suitable for

operational leadership, organisational decision-makers may unconsciously reproduce occupational segregation even when official rules permit women to compete for leadership positions.

Occupational segregation can become self-reinforcing through the accumulation of professional experience. Consider a hypothetical career pathway in which two officers possess equivalent formal qualifications, but one officer receives repeated assignments involving operational command while the other receives predominantly administrative responsibilities. When promotion decisions later consider leadership experience, the first officer possesses a professional record that appears objectively stronger. The disparity at the promotion stage may therefore conceal an earlier disparity in assignment opportunities. This mechanism is particularly important for gender analysis because inequality can become embedded in apparently neutral performance criteria. The resulting organisation may sincerely claim to promote based on merit while failing to recognise that merit itself has been accumulated under unequal conditions.

This problem suggests that gender-responsive human-resource management must examine not only whether assignments are formally open to women but also whether assignment patterns are systematically differentiated by gender. Such an assessment would require institutional data capable of examining women's and men's distribution across operational, investigative, administrative, community-oriented, technical, and leadership functions. Without disaggregated information, organisational claims concerning equality may remain difficult to evaluate. The objective is not to require identical numerical distribution across every police function, because legitimate operational requirements and individual preferences necessarily produce variation. Instead, the purpose is to identify persistent gender patterns that cannot be adequately explained by qualifications, preferences, or organisational needs.

The issue is particularly important for specialised units because specialist assignments may provide distinctive forms of organisational prestige. Women who enter elite or operationally demanding units may encounter both opportunities and additional cultural pressures. Research on women working in male-dominated police roles has found that occupational and organisational factors interact with the distinctive demands of high-risk assignments (Rabe-Hemp 2024). The presence of women in these positions can challenge stereotypes about appropriate gender roles, but it may also expose women to heightened scrutiny because they are working in spaces where women remain underrepresented. Consequently, increasing access to specialist assignments should be accompanied by organisational mechanisms that ensure women are evaluated through consistent professional standards rather than through gendered assumptions about their presence.

C. Recruitment, Representation, and the Limits of Numerical Equality

Recruitment remains a necessary component of gender equality because historical exclusion cannot be corrected without increasing women's access to the profession. However, recruitment should be understood as the beginning rather than the completion of institutional transformation. The Indonesian National Police has explicitly identified increasing the number of female officers as an institutional objective. In 2024, the police chief stated that women represented approximately 5.6 percent of the total police force and emphasised the importance of increasing female participation (Indonesian National Police 2024a). In 2025, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection similarly reported that women constituted approximately 6 percent of police personnel, or around 26,000 officers among approximately 434,000 police personnel in the figures it cited for 2023 (Indonesian National Police 2025a). *Tribrata News* These figures indicate that women remain a minority within the organisation despite decades of institutional participation.

The numerical dimension nevertheless needs careful interpretation. A low proportion of women may indicate barriers to recruitment, but it can also reflect historical recruitment structures, differences in applicant pools, occupational preferences, or institutional capacity. Conversely, a higher proportion would not automatically demonstrate substantive equality. The analytical value of representation lies in what it reveals about access to an institution, but representation becomes more meaningful when examined alongside occupational distribution and authority. A police organisation with a growing number of women but limited female participation in operational command may experience what can be termed representational expansion without institutional redistribution. The two processes should therefore be empirically distinguished.

The concept of descriptive representation is useful in this respect. Descriptive representation refers to the extent to which the demographic composition of an institution reflects the population or relevant professional pool. Substantive representation concerns whether members of an underrepresented group influence decisions, policies, institutional priorities, and professional practices. In policing, the distinction matters because women officers can provide descriptive representation without necessarily possessing sufficient organisational authority to influence institutional structures. Conversely, women in leadership positions may exercise substantive influence even while women remain numerically underrepresented overall. A comprehensive gender-equality strategy therefore requires attention to both dimensions rather than treating one as a substitute for the other.

Indonesian institutional developments demonstrate that movement toward leadership representation has occurred. In 2023, the National Police opened opportunities for female officers to compete for senior leadership positions, presenting the initiative as part of the effort to expand women's career opportunities

(Indonesian National Police 2023). Such initiatives are institutionally significant because leadership representation has a multiplier effect: senior officers influence recruitment, assignments, organisational priorities, mentoring, and professional norms. The presence of women in senior positions can therefore create institutional pathways through which gender equality becomes incorporated into decision-making. Yet the effectiveness of leadership initiatives depends upon whether they are embedded within transparent and sustainable career systems rather than dependent upon individual appointments.

The importance of senior representation is further demonstrated by developments in 2025. The National Police reported appointments and promotions involving numerous female officers, including appointments to strategic regional and sub-regional positions. The institution described these changes as part of professional development and public-service optimisation (Indonesian National Police 2025b). These developments indicate that female officers are increasingly visible within positions involving organisational authority. Nevertheless, such developments should be interpreted as evidence of institutional change rather than as proof that gender inequality has been eliminated. A few high-profile appointments can coexist with persistent structural constraints affecting the wider population of female officers.

This distinction is especially important for academic analysis because exceptional cases can obscure institutional patterns. The career success of a highly accomplished female officer demonstrates that women can reach senior positions, but it does not establish that all qualified women have equivalent access to the same opportunities. Individual success can sometimes be used rhetorically to demonstrate that an institution is meritocratic, while broader structural inequalities remain less visible. A rigorous analysis must therefore examine both achievement and distribution. The relevant question is not whether women can succeed within Indonesian policing; documented evidence clearly demonstrates that they can. The more significant question is whether organisational systems provide sufficiently equitable conditions for women across different career stages, assignments, regions, and professional backgrounds.

D. Promotion, Leadership, and Professional Development

Promotion is one of the clearest institutional mechanisms through which gender equality can be evaluated because promotion transforms professional competence into organisational authority. Police rank structures are not merely symbolic hierarchies; rank determines responsibilities, decision-making authority, access to resources, supervisory responsibilities, and organisational visibility. Gender disparities in promotion can therefore have consequences extending across the entire institution. If women are less likely to progress into supervisory and command positions, their participation in organisational decision-making remains constrained even when their overall numerical presence increases. The promotion

process should consequently be examined as part of a broader professional-development system rather than as an isolated administrative procedure.

Professional development begins long before a formal promotion decision. Officers develop career capital through education, specialised training, operational assignments, mentoring, performance evaluation, networking, and exposure to senior leadership. Gender inequality at any of these stages can affect later promotion. For example, an officer denied access to specialised training may later appear less qualified for a specialist position. An officer excluded from operational command may subsequently have fewer leadership credentials. An officer without access to mentoring may have less knowledge about informal promotion expectations. These processes illustrate why equality requires attention to cumulative career development. Promotion outcomes are often the endpoint of a sequence of earlier organisational decisions.

The Indonesian police have introduced initiatives directly addressing leadership development and gender capacity. In April 2025, the Directorate for Women and Children Protection and Human Trafficking organised a gender “Train the Trainers” programme at the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation in Semarang. The programme sought to create agents of change capable of supporting an inclusive, gender-fair, and community-responsive organisational environment (Indonesian National Police 2025c). Such training is significant because it treats gender equality as an organisational capacity issue rather than solely a personnel composition issue. Training officers who can disseminate gender-responsive knowledge may create institutional diffusion, allowing gender considerations to move beyond specialist units.

Nevertheless, training alone cannot overcome structural inequality. Training can change knowledge and attitudes, but its organisational effect depends upon whether institutional incentives support the behaviours promoted by training. If officers are trained in gender-responsive leadership but promotion systems reward only traditional forms of operational performance, the organisational impact of training may be limited. Similarly, if officers are taught that women should have equal access to operational roles while informal assignment practices continue to reproduce gender stereotypes, a gap emerges between formal learning and organisational practice. Effective professional development therefore requires alignment between training, assignment, supervision, evaluation, promotion, and leadership accountability.

Leadership development also has an important symbolic effect on organisational culture. Women in leadership positions can disrupt assumptions that command authority is inherently masculine. However, female leaders may simultaneously face a heightened burden of representation. When women remain a small minority, the performance of individual female leaders can become interpreted as evidence about women as a group. This creates an asymmetrical professional condition: mistakes by male officers may remain individualised, while mistakes by female officers can be interpreted through gender stereotypes.

Organisational systems should therefore protect professional evaluation from such generalisation by applying consistent performance criteria and ensuring that women are not treated as symbolic representatives whose conduct is presumed to validate or undermine gender equality.

The importance of leadership representation is recognised in Indonesian police discourse. In 2025, the National Police Chief stated that female officers should have equal opportunities to serve in operational areas and emphasised institutional support and continuous improvement in public service (Indonesian National Police 2025d). This statement represents a shift from viewing women primarily through a specialist-service lens toward recognising them as full participants across operational policing. Such a shift is conceptually important because substantive equality requires women to be recognised as police professionals across the occupational spectrum. However, translating this principle into organisational practice requires measurable mechanisms for monitoring assignments, training participation, promotion, and leadership access.

E. Work–Family Pressures and Organisational Expectations

Work–family relations constitute another significant dimension of gender inequality in policing because police work often involves unpredictable schedules, shift duties, emergency deployment, geographical mobility, and organisational expectations of high availability. These occupational characteristics can interact with broader social expectations that women carry disproportionate responsibility for domestic and caregiving work. The resulting inequality may not take the form of an explicit organisational prohibition. Instead, it may emerge because career advancement is implicitly associated with a pattern of availability that is easier to sustain for personnel whose domestic responsibilities are less demanding or differently distributed. In Indonesia, the police leadership's acknowledgement of “double standards” affecting female officers directly identifies this tension between professional obligations and gendered expectations of domestic responsibility (Indonesian National Police 2024a).

The work–family problem should not be interpreted as an argument that women are inherently less suited to demanding police work. Such an interpretation would reproduce the very gender stereotypes that institutional reform seeks to overcome. The more appropriate analytical question concerns how organisational structures distribute the costs of combining professional and family responsibilities. Men may also experience caregiving responsibilities, and not every woman has identical family circumstances. Nevertheless, where social norms disproportionately assign domestic labour to women, an occupational structure that assumes unrestricted availability can produce gendered consequences. The solution therefore lies not in reducing professional expectations for women but in designing organisational systems capable of supporting personnel with legitimate family responsibilities while preserving professional standards.

Work–family policies are consequently connected to retention and professional development. If female officers perceive that career advancement requires sacrificing family responsibilities, some may alter their career ambitions, seek assignments perceived as more compatible with family life, or leave the organisation. Such decisions may later be interpreted as evidence that women are less interested in leadership or operational work, when the underlying cause may involve organisational incompatibility. This creates a circular process in which institutional structures generate gendered career patterns that are subsequently interpreted as evidence of natural gender differences. Breaking this cycle requires organisational data and qualitative research capable of distinguishing preference from constraint.

The problem also has implications for male officers. An organisational culture that equates professionalism with unlimited availability can impose substantial pressures on all personnel. Gender-responsive organisational reform can therefore be understood as a broader transformation of work organisation rather than a special accommodation for women. Flexible administrative arrangements, predictable scheduling where operationally possible, fair leave systems, childcare support, and transparent workload management can benefit personnel across gender categories. The relevance to equality arises because such measures can reduce the extent to which professional advancement depends upon conformity to traditional gender arrangements. In this sense, gender-responsive reform can improve organisational sustainability without compromising operational effectiveness.

F. Workplace Protection, Discrimination, and Organisational Justice

Gender equality also depends upon whether women experience the workplace as institutionally safe and professionally fair. Organisational justice encompasses perceptions and practices concerning fair treatment, procedural fairness, resource distribution, interpersonal respect, and access to mechanisms for addressing wrongdoing. Research on female police officers demonstrates that organisational injustice can be interconnected with discrimination, inadequate support, and adverse wellbeing outcomes (MacDonald et al. 2024). This finding is relevant to policing because the occupational environment already involves substantial stress and risk. When organisational inequality is added to operational demands, women may experience a compounded professional burden. Workplace protection should therefore be considered a central component of professional development rather than a separate welfare issue.

Discrimination may be explicit or implicit. Explicit discrimination occurs when a person is treated differently because of gender through identifiable decisions or rules. Implicit discrimination is more difficult to detect because it may emerge through stereotypes, assumptions, informal networks, discretionary assignments, or differential expectations. For example, a female officer may be

considered less available for deployment because supervisors assume that she has family responsibilities, while a male officer's family situation is not similarly considered. Such decisions may be presented as practical rather than discriminatory. Yet when repeated across an organisation, they can create systematic differences in professional opportunity.

Sexual harassment represents a particularly serious dimension of workplace inequality because it undermines dignity, safety, and professional autonomy. The existence of general legal protections does not automatically ensure effective prevention and reporting within hierarchical institutions. Police organisations require mechanisms through which complaints can be raised without fear of retaliation, procedures that ensure confidentiality and due process, trained personnel capable of handling complaints, and leadership accountability. These mechanisms are especially important in highly hierarchical organisations because the person accused of misconduct may possess greater rank, authority, or influence than the complainant. Without credible institutional safeguards, formal prohibitions may have limited practical value.

The broader Indonesian legal environment has developed significantly through Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes, which provides a legal framework for addressing sexual violence and strengthening victim protection. This development increases the institutional responsibility of police organisations both as law-enforcement agencies and as workplaces. Police personnel must be able to investigate sexual violence against members of the public while the institution must simultaneously ensure that its own workplace practices comply with principles of dignity and protection. Gender-responsive policing therefore requires consistency between internal and external standards: an organisation that seeks to provide sensitive services to victims must also maintain credible internal mechanisms for preventing and addressing gender-based misconduct.

Organisational justice further requires that gender equality policies be accompanied by accountability. Public statements supporting equality are important because they establish institutional direction, but policy credibility depends upon whether personnel can observe consequences in everyday organisational processes. Monitoring mechanisms could examine recruitment, assignments, promotion, training participation, leadership appointments, complaints, and retention according to gender. Such monitoring would not necessarily imply preferential treatment. Instead, it would make institutional patterns visible and allow leadership to identify disparities that require investigation. The fundamental principle is transparency: without information concerning how professional opportunities are distributed, gender equality remains difficult to evaluate beyond highly visible appointments or public declarations.

G. Gender-Responsive Policing and Public Service

The internal transformation of police organisations is closely connected to the quality of services delivered to communities. Gender-responsive policing

recognises that crime, victimisation, security needs, and interactions with law enforcement can be experienced differently according to gender and social position. International police policy has increasingly emphasised women's participation as relevant to community-oriented policing, investigations, leadership, and engagement with vulnerable populations (UN Police 2025). The purpose is not to suggest that women are naturally more empathetic or inherently better suited to working with victims. Such claims risk essentialising gender. Rather, diverse police personnel can broaden institutional knowledge and increase the organisation's capacity to understand different experiences, particularly when diversity is accompanied by appropriate professional training.

In Indonesia, the connection between women police officers and gender-responsive service delivery is particularly evident in institutional responses to violence against women and children. The development of specialised structures addressing women and children, including the Directorate for the Protection of Women and Children established in 2022, indicates institutional recognition of differentiated victim needs (UN Women 2024). In 2025, representatives of Komnas Perempuan similarly emphasised the importance of policewomen in addressing gender-based violence while arguing that their participation should extend into leadership and strategic functions rather than remain symbolic (Indonesian National Police 2025e). This distinction is essential because gender-responsive policing requires institutional authority as well as frontline representation.

The argument for female participation should therefore avoid biological or essentialist reasoning. Women officers should not be assumed to possess an automatic capacity for empathy, victim-centred communication, or gender sensitivity merely because they are women. Such assumptions could reproduce gender stereotypes within policing. Instead, gender responsiveness should be treated as a professional competence that can be developed among all officers through education, training, organisational learning, and experience. Female officers may nevertheless bring valuable perspectives derived from their social experiences and professional interactions, while male officers can also become effective advocates of gender-responsive policing. The institutional objective should consequently be to build gender competence across the organisation while ensuring meaningful representation of women.

The concept of gender-responsive policing also requires attention to intersectionality. Women do not constitute a homogeneous social category. Age, socioeconomic position, ethnicity, disability, geographic location, migration status, and other characteristics can shape experiences of policing. Indonesian policing operates across highly diverse regions and communities, making a uniform understanding of women's needs inadequate. A gender-responsive institution must therefore be capable of recognising variation among citizens and avoiding the assumption that one model of female experience applies universally. This reinforces the importance of professional education that combines gender analysis with broader human-rights and victim-centred approaches.

The development of gender-responsive policing consequently has implications for legitimacy. Police legitimacy depends partly upon citizens' perceptions that police authority is exercised fairly, respectfully, and consistently. When victims perceive that their experiences are dismissed or misunderstood, institutional legitimacy can be weakened. Gender-responsive procedures can contribute to legitimacy by improving communication, investigative practice, referral mechanisms, and protection. However, legitimacy cannot be created solely through the visible presence of female officers. It depends on the broader institutional capacity to treat citizens fairly and respond effectively to their needs. Women's representation is therefore one component of legitimacy rather than a substitute for professional competence.

H. Institutional Change, Leadership, and Organisational Accountability

The evidence reviewed above indicates that gender equality in Indonesian policing is best understood as an institutional transformation process. Formal policies provide a necessary foundation, but their effects depend upon organisational implementation. Indonesia's gender-mainstreaming framework already establishes a normative basis for integrating gender into government institutions, while Polri has publicly articulated commitments to women's participation, leadership, and gender-responsive service delivery (Republic of Indonesia 2000; Indonesian National Police 2025d). The central challenge is therefore not the absence of gender equality as a policy objective. Rather, it concerns the extent to which institutional systems translate that objective into predictable and equitable professional opportunities.

Leadership is particularly important because organisational transformation requires authority capable of changing routines. Senior leaders influence personnel assignments, promotion decisions, training priorities, resource allocation, organisational narratives, and accountability systems. Women's representation in leadership can therefore contribute to institutional transformation, but leadership commitment must not depend exclusively on individual female or male champions. If gender equality depends on a small number of supportive leaders, progress may be vulnerable to personnel rotation. Sustainable institutionalisation requires gender-responsive principles to become embedded in organisational procedures, performance indicators, training systems, and accountability structures.

The National Police's 2025 HeForShe initiative illustrates an attempt to institutionalise leadership responsibility for gender equality. The programme recognised police leaders who were considered to have contributed to gender equality, women's empowerment, and inclusive leadership within their respective units (Indonesian National Police 2025f). *Tribrata News* Such initiatives can be valuable because they connect gender equality with leadership performance rather than treating it exclusively as a women's issue. At the same time, recognition systems should ideally be accompanied by transparent criteria and measurable

organisational outcomes. Awards and public commitments can reinforce institutional norms, but they should complement rather than replace systematic monitoring of career opportunities, workplace conditions, and representation.

The institutionalisation of gender equality also requires data. Without reliable and disaggregated data, it is difficult to determine where disparities emerge or whether interventions produce meaningful change. Gender-disaggregated information could examine recruitment, training, specialist assignments, operational deployment, promotion, leadership, retention, complaints, and career interruption. Such information would permit the organisation to identify whether women are entering at lower rates, leaving at higher rates, receiving different assignments, or encountering barriers at specific stages of promotion. Data would also allow gender policies to become evidence-based rather than position is important, but the deeper measure of change is whether women can pursue senior positions through predictable pathways. A gender-equitable organisation is not one in which women occasionally overcome barriers through exceptional individual achievement. It is one in which institutional arrangements minimise unnecessary barriers and distribute professional opportunities according to transparent and relevant criteria. This distinction shifts the focus from dependent primarily upon anecdotal success stories.

The broader argument is that organisational transformation should be assessed through institutional processes rather than symbolic milestones. The appointment of a woman to a senior position is important, but the deeper measure of change is whether women can pursue senior positions through predictable pathways. A gender-equitable organisation is not one in which women occasionally overcome barriers through exceptional individual achievement. It is one in which institutional arrangements minimise unnecessary barriers and distribute professional opportunities according to transparent and relevant criteria. This distinction shifts the focus from celebrating exceptional women to transforming the organisational conditions under which professional achievement occurs.

I. Toward a Substantive Equality Model for Indonesian Policing

A substantive equality model for Indonesian policing would connect representation, professional development, organisational culture, and public service into a single institutional framework. Under such a model, recruitment would be treated as one stage of a continuous professional lifecycle rather than the principal measure of equality. Organisational leaders would evaluate whether women have comparable access to training, operational experience, specialist assignments, mentoring, promotion, and leadership. The purpose would not be to guarantee identical career outcomes because individual choices and professional performance necessarily differ. Rather, it would be to ensure that gender is not an unnecessary determinant of professional opportunity. This distinction provides a more defensible basis for institutional reform than numerical parity alone.

The first transformation concerns the distribution of professional opportunities. Police organisations should be capable of demonstrating that assignments are based on relevant professional criteria rather than gender stereotypes. Where women are concentrated in particular functions, organisational analysis should determine whether the pattern results from preference, qualifications, operational necessity, or institutional assumptions. Such analysis should also examine whether particular functions are systematically associated with promotion advantages. The objective is not forced occupational symmetry but transparent opportunity. If women who meet relevant professional requirements are consistently excluded from operational or leadership assignments, the organisation should treat this as an institutional issue rather, victim-centred practice, and organisational bias. The 2025 gender Train the Trainers programme within Polri provides an example of an institutional approach that seeks to develop internal agents than an individual career problem.

The second transformation concerns professional development. Training programmes should extend beyond generic awareness of gender equality and address leadership, investigation, decision-making, workplace conduct, victim-centred practice, and organisational bias. The 2025 gender Train the Trainers programme within Polri provides an example of an institutional approach that seeks to develop internal agents of change (Indonesian National Police 2025c). The longer-term effectiveness of such programmes, however, depends on whether trained personnel are positioned to influence their units and whether gender-responsive competencies become part of routine performance evaluation. Professional development should therefore be understood as a mechanism for institutional learning rather than a short-term training event.

The third transformation concerns organisational culture. Culture changes when formal expectations, leadership behaviour, peer norms, incentives, and accountability mechanisms reinforce one another. Public commitments to equality are valuable, but they must be supported by everyday managerial practices. Supervisors should be expected to evaluate personnel consistently, distribute assignments transparently, challenge gender stereotypes, and respond appropriately to workplace concerns. Leadership development should similarly prepare both women and men to recognise how informal organisational practices can reproduce inequality. Gender equality becomes more sustainable when it is incorporated into ordinary management rather than treated as a specialised project.

The fourth transformation concerns workplace protection. Police institutions require credible mechanisms for preventing discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Such mechanisms should be accessible, confidential where appropriate, procedurally fair, and independent enough to maintain confidence among personnel. Protection should extend beyond responding to serious misconduct after it occurs. Organisational prevention requires clear behavioural standards, supervisory responsibility, training, monitoring, and regular assessment of workplace climate. Research linking organisational injustice to the wellbeing of

female police officers demonstrates why workplace protection should be considered part of institutional effectiveness rather than merely an employee-relations concern (MacDonald et al. 2024).

The fifth transformation concerns the relationship between internal equality and external service delivery. Policewomen should not be valued solely because they can perform specialised functions involving women and children. They should be recognised as professionals capable of participating across the full range of police work, while all officers should develop gender-responsive competencies. This approach avoids essentialising women while preserving the institutional value of diverse representation. The objective is an organisation in which gender diversity contributes to professional capacity without reproducing the assumption that women belong only in “women's work.” Such a model would align internal employment equality with the broader public-service responsibilities of Polri.

J. From Representation to Institutional Transformation

The central finding emerging from the analysis is that Indonesia's gender-equality challenge in policing has shifted from a question of formal access toward a more complex question of institutional integration. Women have long been part of the Indonesian police organisation, and contemporary institutional developments demonstrate increasing recognition of women's leadership and operational contributions. Yet official acknowledgement of persistent stereotypes, together with academic research on gender mainstreaming and leadership placement, indicates that organisational culture continues to influence professional opportunities (Siregar, Nurdin, and Rivai 2023; Indonesian National Police 2024a). This means that the next stage of reform cannot be limited to increasing recruitment. It must address how women experience the organisation after recruitment and how professional trajectories are constructed.

The Indonesian case also demonstrates why numerical representation and substantive equality should be analytically separated. The reported proportion of female personnel remains relatively low, while the organisation has simultaneously produced visible examples of women occupying senior and strategic positions (Indonesian National Police 2024a, 2025b). These developments are not contradictory. They demonstrate that institutional transformation can be uneven, with leadership opportunities expanding before broader numerical representation reaches substantially higher levels. The analytical challenge is therefore to examine whether leadership developments become institutional pathways that benefit subsequent generations of women or remain exceptional cases. Sustainable transformation requires the former.

The findings further suggest that professional development functions as the bridge between representation and leadership. Recruitment creates institutional membership, but professional development creates the experience and credentials through which membership becomes authority. This is why assignment practices, training, mentoring, and operational exposure deserve greater attention in future

research. If women receive equal access to these developmental resources, differences in promotion can be examined more confidently through professional criteria. If access remains gendered, promotion disparities cannot be interpreted solely as individual differences in performance. The institutional distribution of opportunity becomes part of the explanation.

A further implication concerns the meaning of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming should not be understood as adding women to existing organisational structures while leaving those structures unchanged. Its more ambitious purpose is to examine how institutional systems affect women and men into mainstream policing. The most defensible argument is therefore not that women inherently produce better policing, but that exclusionary or restrictive organisational structures unnecessarily limit the institution's available human resources and differently and to modify those systems when necessary. Indonesia's Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 provides a normative foundation for such an approach (Republic of Indonesia 2000). The challenge for policing is operationalising the principle across human-resource management, professional education, leadership, deployment, and service delivery. Gender mainstreaming therefore becomes meaningful when it changes organisational decisions rather than simply appearing in policy language.

The Indonesian police's recent gender initiatives indicate movement toward such institutionalisation. Gender training, leadership initiatives, HeForShe activities, and the appointment of women to strategic roles demonstrate that gender equality has become increasingly visible within institutional policy discourse (Indonesian National Police 2025c, 2025f). Yet visibility should not be confused with completion. The long-term test is whether these initiatives alter organisational routines. This requires systematic evaluation rather than reliance on public statements. Future studies should therefore examine whether women participating in these programmes experience measurable changes in training access, assignments, promotion, leadership opportunities, and workplace climate.

The analysis also suggests that gender equality and police effectiveness should not be treated as competing institutional objectives. A more diverse police organisation can potentially broaden institutional knowledge, improve communication with different communities, and strengthen responses to gender-specific forms of victimisation. However, such outcomes are not automatic consequences of employing women. They depend upon professional competence, organisational support, and the integration of gender-responsive practices into mainstream policing. The most defensible argument is therefore not that women inherently produce better policing, but that exclusionary or restrictive organisational structures unnecessarily limit the institution's available human resources and perspectives.

The distinction is especially important because gender equality should not become a justification for assigning women stereotypically gendered responsibilities. If policewomen are consistently directed toward cases involving

women and children while male officers dominate other operational functions, representation may reinforce rather than challenge occupational stereotypes. Gender-responsive policing should instead develop the capacity of all officers to respond appropriately to gender-based violence while ensuring that women have equal access to broader professional roles. Specialised expertise remains necessary, but specialisation should coexist with organisational integration. This principle prevents gender equality from becoming another form of recipients of organisational change; they actively negotiate professional identities, seek leadership opportunities, and contribute to the transformation of policing. At the same time, individual agency cannot substitute for institutional reform. A system that requires women to overcome structural barriers through exceptional determination remains different from a system that systematically removes unnecessary barriers.

The long-term objective should therefore be to move representation, professional development, organisational culture, leadership, workplace protection, and public-service responsiveness. The evidence examined in this article demonstrates that women have become an established component of the Indonesian National Police and that institutional initiatives increasingly recognise their contribution to leadership and operational policing. At the same time, official police statements and academic research identify continuing stereotypes concerning appropriate roles, domestic responsibilities, representation, although important, is insufficient as the primary indicator of gender equality. A police organisation may increase the number of women while continuing to reproduce occupational segregation, unequal access to developmental assignments, limited leadership opportunities, and gendered expectations. Substantive equality requires attention to the professional pathways through which officers accumulate experience, expertise, authority, and organisational recognition. Recruitment must therefore be connected to equitable deployment, training, mentoring, promotion, leadership development, and workplace protection.

Such an approach would enable Polri to evaluate gender equality as an organisational process rather than broad public-service responsibility. More recent institutional initiatives concerning gender training, women's leadership, gender-responsive policing, and protection of women and children demonstrate continuing organisational development. The challenge is to ensure that these initiatives become embedded within routine organisational systems. Their effectiveness should therefore be evaluated through transparent indicators concerning career access, assignments, training, promotion, leadership, workplace climate, and service training, promotion, family responsibilities, workplace culture, and leadership interact over the course of police careers. Comparative research between male and female officers could further identify whether differences in career outcomes result, the transformation of gender relations within Indonesian policing is not simply a matter of increasing the presence of women. It concerns redefining how professional competence, leadership, authority, and public service are

institutionally organised. A genuinely inclusive police organisation would not require women to assimilate completely into historically masculine occupational norms, nor would it confine women to specialised functions associated with femininity. Instead, it would establish professional standards that are transparent, relevant, and equally accessible while recognising the diversity of experiences within the police workforce and the communities it serves. Such institutional occupational segregation.

Finally, the Indonesian case illustrates that institutional transformation is a gradual process involving interaction between policy, organisational culture, leadership, and professional agency. Women officers are not passive recipients of organisational change; they actively negotiate professional identities, seek leadership opportunities, and contribute to the transformation of policing. At the same time, individual agency cannot substitute for institutional reform. A system that requires women to overcome structural barriers through exceptional determination remains different from a system that systematically removes unnecessary barriers. The long-term objective should therefore be to move from individual accommodation toward institutional design in which gender equality becomes an ordinary feature of professional policing.

Conclusion

Gender equality within Indonesian policing should be understood as a multidimensional institutional issue involving representation, professional development, organisational culture, leadership, workplace protection, and public-service responsiveness. The evidence examined in this article demonstrates that women have become an established component of the Indonesian National Police and that institutional initiatives increasingly recognise their contribution to leadership and operational policing. At the same time, official police statements and academic research identify continuing stereotypes concerning appropriate roles, domestic responsibilities, and women's suitability for particular assignments. These findings indicate that formal inclusion has not automatically eliminated the organisational processes through which gender inequality can be reproduced.

The central implication is that numerical representation, although important, is insufficient as the primary indicator of gender equality. A police organisation may increase the number of women while continuing to reproduce occupational segregation, unequal access to developmental assignments, limited leadership opportunities, and gendered expectations. Substantive equality requires attention to the professional pathways through which officers accumulate experience, expertise, authority, and organisational recognition. Recruitment must therefore be connected to equitable deployment, training, mentoring, promotion, leadership development, and workplace protection. Such an approach would enable Polri to evaluate gender equality as an organisational process rather than as a demographic statistic.

The Indonesian policy framework provides a substantial foundation for this transformation. Gender mainstreaming has formal recognition within national governance, while the legal framework governing policing establishes a broad public-service responsibility. More recent institutional initiatives concerning gender training, women's leadership, gender-responsive policing, and protection of women and children demonstrate continuing organisational development. The challenge is to ensure that these initiatives become embedded within routine organisational systems. Their effectiveness should therefore be evaluated through transparent indicators concerning career access, assignments, training, promotion, leadership, workplace climate, and service outcomes.

Future research should strengthen this documentary analysis through empirical investigation of policewomen's experiences across different organisational levels and geographic contexts. Particular attention should be given to how recruitment, deployment, training, promotion, family responsibilities, workplace culture, and leadership interact over the course of police careers. Comparative research between male and female officers could further identify whether differences in career outcomes result from individual characteristics, organisational practices, or their interaction. Longitudinal research would be especially valuable because gender inequality may accumulate gradually across careers rather than appearing in a single organisational decision.

Ultimately, the transformation of gender relations within Indonesian policing is not simply a matter of increasing the presence of women. It concerns redefining how professional competence, leadership, authority, and public service are institutionally organised. A genuinely inclusive police organisation would not require women to assimilate completely into historically masculine occupational norms, nor would it confine women to specialised functions associated with femininity. Instead, it would establish professional standards that are transparent, relevant, and equally accessible while recognising the diversity of experiences within the police workforce and the communities it serves. Such institutional transformation would strengthen the relationship between gender equality, professional development, and responsive policing in Indonesia.

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Generative AI Statement

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