Dynamics of Wife-Initiated Divorce in Aceh Province: A Regency and Municipality Analysis, 2024–2025

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ABSTRACT
Wife-initiated divorce is the dominant form of marital dissolution in Aceh Province and displays different patterns across regions. This study examines its dynamics in 23 regencies and municipalities during 2024–2025. A descriptive quantitative approach was applied to secondary administrative data published by BPS-Statistics Aceh Province and sourced from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Supreme Court's Directorate General of Religious Courts. Documentary data were analysed by comparing case numbers, percentage changes, proportions, and regional rankings. Wife-initiated divorce increased from 4,739 cases in 2024 to 5,206 cases in 2025, representing growth of 9.9%. It accounted for 79.9% of all divorces in 2024 and 80.4% in 2025. Sixteen regions recorded increases, six recorded decreases, and one remained unchanged. Aceh Tamiang had the largest absolute increase, Aceh Jaya had the highest relative growth, and Aceh Utara retained the largest number of cases. The findings demonstrate that wife-initiated divorce increased but was spatially uneven. Family mediation, legal services, and the protection of women and children should therefore be adapted to the distinctive patterns and service needs of each region.

Keywords: Aceh; regional variation; Sharia Court; wife-initiated divorce

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is both a social and religious institution. It supports family formation, childrearing, emotional care, and the reproduction of social life. In Islamic thought, marriage is commonly described as a solemn covenant intended to foster tranquillity, affection, responsibility, and mutual protection. These normative purposes, however, are not always realised in everyday family life. Marital stability depends on the capacity of spouses to communicate, fulfil obligations, manage economic pressures, negotiate changing roles, and resolve disagreement without persistent harm.

When marital conflict can no longer be resolved, divorce provides a formal mechanism for terminating the marital bond. Divorce changes legal status, but its significance extends beyond legal dissolution. It can reshape household income, caregiving arrangements, parental responsibilities, residence, kinship relations, and the practical enjoyment of post-divorce rights. Ramadhita et al. (2023) argue that Muslim divorce procedures in Indonesia may reproduce gender inequality unless judges actively use discretion to protect women's rights. Divorce therefore needs to be examined as a simultaneously legal, social, and institutional process.

Aceh offers a distinctive setting for this discussion because family life is shaped by Islamic norms, customary practices, and strong kinship relations. For Muslim residents, marriage and divorce cases are formally handled by the Mahkamah Syar'iyah, Aceh's Sharia Courts within the national religious court system. Family disputes may also involve parents, extended families, religious leaders, village officials, and customary institutions before reaching court. These multiple arenas influence whether and how marital conflict is formally processed.

Muhazir et al. (2025) identify a form of institutional contestation between customary mechanisms and formal courts in divorce resolution in Langsa. Customary processes may be

perceived as accessible and socially legitimate, yet settlements outside the formal justice system can leave the legal status of divorce and the rights of women and children uncertain. This interaction between community processes and judicial institutions is particularly relevant when examining women's decisions to use formal litigation.

Wife-initiated divorce, known in Indonesian Islamic family law as cerai gugat, is a divorce case filed by a wife before a Religious Court or Mahkamah Syar'iyah. It differs procedurally from cerai talak, in which a husband petitions the court for permission to pronounce divorce. This distinction identifies the party who initiates the proceeding. It does not identify the party responsible for marital breakdown and should not be used to attribute fault to women.

The high number of wife-initiated cases should accordingly be interpreted with care. Filing a lawsuit may represent a formal response to a marriage that the wife considers impossible, unsafe, or unjust to continue. It may also reflect legal awareness, practical access to court, support from relatives, or confidence that formal proceedings can provide legal certainty. The administrative category by itself does not reveal the full history of the relationship or the motives behind each claim.

Abubakar (2020) explains that the growth of wife-initiated divorce in the Mahkamah Syar'iyah is associated with several conditions, including disharmony that develops into continuous disputes, changing social values, greater recognition of equal marital rights, and increased legal awareness among women. This account helps move the interpretation beyond an assumption of weakened commitment. It presents litigation as a legal action taken in response to perceived harm, persistent conflict, or the absence of a viable marital relationship.

From the perspective of Islamic family law, wife-initiated divorce also raises questions of welfare, protection, and justice. Mufti (2024) situates women's initiation of divorce within the capacity of Islamic family law to respond to gender equality and social change through a maqāṣid al-sharīʿah framework. Under this approach, preserving marriage cannot be separated from preventing harm and protecting the legitimate interests of family members.

Access to a divorce procedure nevertheless does not automatically ensure substantive justice. Kholidah et al. (2023) show that divorce decisions that fail to secure maintenance and compensatory rights may deepen women's economic and social vulnerability. Post-divorce justice therefore depends not only on the availability of litigation but also on judicial sensitivity, the content of orders, and the practical enforcement of obligations relating to maintenance, children, and other entitlements.

The official statistics demonstrate the empirical importance of the issue in Aceh. BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025b) recorded 4,739 wife-initiated divorces and 1,192 husband-initiated divorces in 2024. Wife-initiated cases represented approximately 79.9% of the 5,931 recorded divorces. Thus, almost four out of every five formal divorce cases in that year were initiated by wives.

BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2026b) recorded 5,206 wife-initiated divorces and 1,265 husband-initiated divorces in 2025. Wife-initiated cases accounted for approximately 80.4% of the 6,471 divorces. Calculations based on the two publications indicate an increase of 467 wife-initiated cases, or 9.9%, from 2024 to 2025. This increase made wife-initiated litigation the principal component of the overall rise in divorce.

The provincial total conceals substantial variation. BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025b, 2026b) provides comparable case counts for all 23 regencies and municipalities. Sixteen regions recorded increases, six recorded decreases, and one recorded no change. The provincial increase was therefore broad, but it was not uniform. Some regions experienced large numerical additions, others grew rapidly from smaller baselines, and several declined while retaining high caseloads.

This distinction makes it necessary to analyse case volume, relative growth, and proportional dominance separately. Case volume indicates the number of proceedings handled by the courts. Relative growth shows the speed of annual change compared with the initial number. The proportion of wife-initiated divorce indicates its position within the overall divorce structure of a region. A region with the largest number is not necessarily the region with the fastest growth or highest proportion.

The development of wife-initiated divorce also occurs within a broader structure of marital conflict. BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025a) identified continuous disputes and quarrels as the most frequently recorded divorce factor in 2024, followed by abandonment, economic problems, and domestic violence. BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2026a) again reported continuous disputes as the dominant factor in 2025. These categories help describe the general environment in which divorce cases occur.

However, the official cause tables combine wife-initiated and husband-initiated divorce. They do not show how many wife-initiated cases were associated with each recorded factor. Continuous disputes, economic hardship, abandonment, and domestic violence therefore cannot be attributed directly to a specified number of wife-initiated claims. Identifying the distinctive background of cerai gugat requires cross-tabulated administrative data, judgment analysis, or primary research.

The growth of wife-initiated cases also has implications for mediation. Iskandar (2022) notes that divorce mediation in Aceh's Sharia Courts faces significant challenges and has not always prevented marital dissolution. Ramadani et al. (2025) report obstacles including the absence of a party, high levels of hostility, prolonged conflict, and limited mediator capacity. These findings suggest that effective mediation needs to identify the substance of conflict rather than rely only on general advice to preserve marriage.

In Aceh, religious guidance remains important in family support and dispute resolution. Yet religious advice should be complemented by attention to communication, maintenance, household finances, childcare, unequal power relations, and personal safety. Jones and Aftab (2023) further argue that compulsory mediation can create risks in cases involving domestic and family violence unless courts first conduct appropriate safety screening. A context-sensitive approach is therefore necessary.

Latifah and Ritonga (2022) show that the determinants of divorce vary across Indonesian regions and include economic pressure, responsibility, continuous quarrels, domestic violence, and communication problems. Their review supports the need to avoid applying a single explanation to all localities. Pakasi et al. (2024) likewise demonstrate that women actively navigate family expectations, religious norms, and social pressures during divorce, highlighting agency rather than passive victimhood.

Warnis et al. (2026) place women's legal consciousness at the centre of wife-initiated divorce litigation in Indonesian Religious Courts. This perspective is useful because administrative growth may represent not only more marital conflict but also changing capacity to recognise legal problems and mobilise formal institutions. The meaning of an increased caseload cannot therefore be established solely from the number of disputes or from assumptions about family decline.

Previous studies have examined the social and legal background of cerai gugat, gender equality, judicial protection, mediation, and the interaction between customary and formal institutions. Most have focused on one court, selected judgments, a normative issue, or a specific locality. Comparative evidence covering all regencies and municipalities in Aceh for the latest two-year period remains limited. The regional distribution of wife-initiated divorce has therefore not received sufficient systematic attention.

This study addresses that gap through a descriptive comparison of all 23 regencies and municipalities in Aceh. Its contribution lies in using official 2024–2025 data to distinguish case volume, relative growth, proportional dominance, and regional change. The study asks

how wife-initiated divorce changed at the provincial level, how the pattern varied across regions, and which areas recorded the most notable increases, decreases, and proportions. The findings are intended to inform geographically responsive mediation, family support, and legal protection.

II. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design using secondary data. Siedlecki (2020) explains that descriptive quantitative research portrays phenomena and variables as they occur without manipulation or causal testing. The design was selected because the study compares the number, annual change, and proportion of wife-initiated divorce cases in Aceh between 2024 and 2025 rather than testing causal relationships.

Secondary analysis uses data previously collected and published for administrative or research purposes. Wickham (2019) notes that existing data can address new research questions when the researcher carefully evaluates definitions, coverage, time periods, and source limitations. This approach was appropriate because official statistics cover every regency and municipality in Aceh and allow consistent regional comparison at relatively low cost.

The primary data were obtained from the official Number of Marriages and Divorces by Regency/Municipality tables. The 2024 figures were published by BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025b), and the 2025 figures were published by BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2026b). The tables report marriages, husband-initiated divorce, wife-initiated divorce, and total divorce. Their administrative sources are the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Supreme Court's Directorate General of Religious Courts.

The unit of analysis comprised all 23 regencies and municipalities in Aceh Province. No regional sampling was conducted because the full territorial population was included. Wife-initiated divorce was defined as a case filed by a wife in the Mahkamah Syar'iyah. Husband-initiated divorce was defined as a case filed by a husband. These terms indicate procedural position and are not used to determine responsibility for marital breakdown.

Data collection used documentary review. Case counts were recorded by region and year, after which the two annual datasets were aligned using standardised regional names. Consistency was checked by summing regional values and comparing them with the provincial totals in the original tables. The reconstructed totals were 4,739 wife-initiated cases in 2024 and 5,206 in 2025, matching the published provincial figures.

Descriptive analysis used counts, percentages, differences, growth rates, proportions, and regional rankings. First, provincial and regional case numbers were compared between the two years. Second, absolute and percentage changes were calculated to identify increases, decreases, and unchanged values. Third, the proportion of wife-initiated divorce in total divorce was calculated for each region. Fourth, regions were ranked by volume, absolute change, relative growth, and proportional dominance. Results are presented in tables and explanatory narrative.

Divorce-cause statistics were used only as contextual information. The 2024 cause data were obtained from BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025a), while the 2025 data were obtained from BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2026a). Recorded categories include continuous disputes and quarrels, abandonment, economic problems, domestic violence, imprisonment, gambling, polygamy, and other factors. Because the tables combine both forms of divorce, these categories were not treated as causes specific to wife-initiated divorce.

The study used public aggregate data containing no personal identifiers. Two limitations guide interpretation. First, the two-year period represents short-term dynamics rather than a long-term trend. Second, the 2024 metadata refer to cases decided by a court for which a divorce certificate had been issued, whereas the 2025 data are presented according to the

plaintiff's domicile and cover plaintiffs domiciled in Indonesia. The analysis therefore emphasises descriptive comparison and avoids causal or individual-level inference.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Result

1. Provincial Development of Wife-Initiated Divorce

BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025b) recorded 4,739 wife-initiated divorces and 1,192 husband-initiated divorces in 2024. BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2026b) recorded 5,206 wife-initiated divorces and 1,265 husband-initiated divorces in 2025. Table 1 summarises the provincial change.

Table 1. Divorce Cases in Aceh Province, 2024–2025

Type of Divorce	2024	2025	Change	Growth
Husband-initiated divorce	1,192	1,265	+73	6.1%
Wife-initiated divorce	4,739	5,206	+467	9.9%
Total divorce	5,931	6,471	+540	9.1%
Proportion of wife-initiated divorce	79.9%	80.4%	+0.5 percentage points	

Source: BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025b, 2026b), processed by the author.

The number of wife-initiated cases increased by 467, or 9.9%, exceeding the 6.1% growth of husband-initiated cases. Wife-initiated divorce accounted for approximately 86.5% of the total increase of 540 divorce cases. Its share of all divorce also grew slightly, from 79.9% to 80.4%. The provincial pattern therefore confirms both numerical growth and sustained structural dominance.

2. Regional Changes

The change was geographically uneven. Sixteen of the 23 regions recorded increases, six recorded decreases, and one remained unchanged. Table 2 presents the complete comparison.

Table 2. Wife-Initiated Divorce by Regency and Municipality, 2024–2025

Regency/Municipality	2024	2025	Change	Growth
Simeulue	65	74	+9	13.8%
Aceh Singkil	89	111	+22	24.7%
Aceh Selatan	171	187	+16	9.4%
Aceh Tenggara	232	254	+22	9.5%
Aceh Timur	346	412	+66	19.1%
Aceh Tengah	322	318	-4	-1.2%
Aceh Barat	122	172	+50	41.0%
Aceh Besar	293	281	-12	-4.1%
Pidie	311	356	+45	14.5%
Bireuen	356	356	+0	0.0%
Aceh Utara	625	597	-28	-4.5%
Aceh Barat Daya	115	125	+10	8.7%
Gayo Lues	79	71	-8	-10.1%
Aceh Tamiang	339	446	+107	31.6%
Nagan Raya	148	152	+4	2.7%
Aceh Jaya	62	101	+39	62.9%
Bener Meriah	188	275	+87	46.3%
Pidie Jaya	120	131	+11	9.2%
Banda Aceh Municipality	245	258	+13	5.3%
Sabang Municipality	35	26	-9	-25.7%
Langsa Municipality	192	214	+22	11.5%

Regency/Municipality	2024	2025	Change	Growth
Lhokseumawe Municipality	203	209	+6	3.0%
Subulussalam Municipality	81	80	-1	-1.2%
Aceh Province	4,739	5,206	+467	9.9%

Source: BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025b, 2026b), processed by the author.

Aceh Tamiang recorded the largest absolute increase, rising from 339 to 446 cases, an addition of 107. It was followed by Bener Meriah with 87 additional cases, Aceh Timur with 66, Aceh Barat with 50, and Pidie with 45. These five regions contributed substantially to the provincial increase, although their initial caseloads differed.

Relative growth produced a different ranking. Aceh Jaya grew by 62.9%, followed by Bener Meriah at 46.3%, Aceh Barat at 41.0%, Aceh Tamiang at 31.6%, and Aceh Singkil at 24.7%. Aceh Jaya's high percentage reflected a comparatively small 2024 baseline. Absolute and relative measures therefore need to be interpreted together.

Aceh Utara recorded the largest absolute decline, falling from 625 to 597 cases. Nevertheless, it retained the highest caseload in 2025. Declines also occurred in Aceh Besar, Sabang, Gayo Lues, Aceh Tengah, and Subulussalam. Bireuen was the only region with no numerical change, recording 356 cases in both years.

3. Regional Proportions

Case numbers describe workload, whereas proportions describe the position of wife-initiated divorce within each region's divorce structure. In 2025, the provincial proportion was 80.4%. The highest regional proportions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Regions with the Highest Proportion of Wife-Initiated Divorce in 2025

Regency/Municipality	Wife-Initiated	Total Divorce	Proportion
Aceh Tamiang	446	515	86.6%
Gayo Lues	71	82	86.6%
Aceh Barat Daya	125	146	85.6%
Simeulue	74	87	85.1%
Sabang Municipality	26	31	83.9%
Aceh Besar	281	341	82.4%
Aceh Utara	597	725	82.3%
Aceh Timur	412	501	82.2%

Source: BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2026b), processed by the author.

Aceh Tamiang and Gayo Lues each recorded a proportion of approximately 86.6%, followed by Aceh Barat Daya at 85.6% and Simeulue at 85.1%. The comparison illustrates why volume and proportion should not be conflated. Gayo Lues had a high proportion but only 71 wife-initiated cases, while Aceh Utara had the highest volume but a lower proportion. Aceh Tamiang was distinctive because it combined a large caseload, the largest absolute increase, and a high proportion.

B. Discussion

1. The Dominance of Wife-Initiated Divorce

The findings establish wife-initiated divorce as the dominant form of formal marital dissolution in Aceh. Its share rose from 79.9% in 2024 to 80.4% in 2025, while its numerical growth exceeded that of husband-initiated divorce. This pattern means that women initiated most divorce proceedings reaching the Mahkamah Syar'iyah during the study period. It does not, however, establish that women caused the breakdown of most marriages.

Abubakar (2020) links the development of cerai gugat to prolonged disharmony, changing social values, recognition of equal marital rights, and women's growing legal awareness. The present findings are consistent with the institutional dimension of that

account. The data demonstrate extensive use of the court procedure available to wives, although they cannot reveal the particular considerations behind each filing.

Mufti (2024) reads women's initiation of divorce as part of the responsiveness of Islamic family law to gender justice and social change. From a maqāṣid al-sharīʿah perspective, preserving marriage must be balanced with the avoidance of harm and the protection of legitimate interests. A high level of cerai gugat can consequently reflect both pressure within families and women's capacity to seek a legally recognised remedy.

Warnis et al. (2026) further demonstrate that litigated divorce involves women's legal consciousness and negotiation of justice within Religious Courts. This perspective cautions against interpreting higher case numbers only as evidence of family deterioration. Growth may also indicate stronger awareness of formal rights, improved access to legal institutions, or greater willingness to transform a personal conflict into a recognised legal claim.

2. Uneven Regional Dynamics

The distribution across 23 regions shows that provincial growth was widespread but uneven. Aceh Tamiang had the largest absolute rise, Aceh Jaya the fastest relative growth, and Aceh Utara the largest volume despite a decline. These contrasting positions demonstrate that no single indicator adequately describes regional dynamics. Caseload, rate of change, and proportional dominance answer different policy questions.

High-volume regions require sufficient court personnel, administrative capacity, mediation services, and mechanisms for implementing post-divorce orders. Rapid-growth regions deserve closer inquiry into recent social and institutional changes. High-proportion regions require attention to the experience of women as the principal users of divorce litigation. A region may belong to more than one category, as illustrated most clearly by Aceh Tamiang.

Latifah and Ritonga (2022) conclude that divorce determinants differ substantially across Indonesian regions. This finding supports a cautious interpretation of the Aceh data. Population size, numbers of married couples, court accessibility, transportation, legal awareness, local employment conditions, and administrative recording may all shape observed caseloads. None of these variables was tested in the present study, so the regional comparison identifies priorities rather than causal explanations.

Baihaki and Handayani (2026) describe rising divorce in Indonesia as a multidimensional socio-legal issue involving socioeconomic pressure, gender awareness, marital readiness, judicial practice, and mediation. Their analysis reinforces the conclusion that the spatial variation found here should not be reduced to one cause. The regional results provide a basis for selecting sites for deeper administrative, judgment-based, or qualitative research.

3. Divorce Factors as Context

BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2025a) recorded continuous disputes and quarrels as the leading divorce factor in 2024, followed by abandonment, economic problems, and domestic violence. BPS-Statistics Aceh Province (2026a) reported the same dominant ordering in 2025. The cause statistics indicate that divorce in Aceh commonly occurs in an environment of persistent relational conflict.

The cause data should nonetheless be interpreted within their administrative limits. They combine husband-initiated and wife-initiated divorce and therefore cannot establish which factors underlay the 4,739 or 5,206 wife-initiated cases. The near-simultaneous growth of wife-initiated divorce and continuous-dispute cases is only an aggregate pattern. It is not evidence that the same cases account for both changes.

Continuous disputes may also operate as a broad legal or administrative category. Disagreements concerning maintenance, debt, communication, jealousy, third parties, gambling, family intervention, or abandonment can develop into repeated quarrels. A more

specific analysis would require a cause-by-case-type table or systematic coding of judgments. This limitation should inform both academic claims and policy use of the statistics.

Pakasi et al. (2024) show that women's pathways through divorce are embedded in local norms, family relations, and social expectations. Administrative categories cannot fully represent these processes. The statistics are valuable for mapping regional patterns, but they need to be complemented by evidence that captures how women interpret conflict, seek assistance, and decide to invoke formal law.

4. Implications for Mediation and Rights Protection

The expansion of wife-initiated litigation has direct implications for mediation and family support. Iskandar (2022) identifies persistent challenges in divorce mediation in Aceh. Ramadani et al. (2025) similarly report that absence, hostility, prolonged conflict, and limited mediator capacity can obstruct settlement. These findings suggest that mediation often begins only after the marital relationship has substantially deteriorated.

Mediation should therefore be based on an assessment of the conflict rather than general exhortation to maintain marriage. Religious guidance is important in Aceh, but it should be integrated with attention to communication, maintenance, employment insecurity, household debt, childcare, unequal power, and safety. Earlier support through KUA offices, religious counsellors, village institutions, and family-service providers may create opportunities for intervention before litigation.

Jones and Aftab (2023) argue that Indonesian Religious Courts should screen divorce cases for domestic and family violence and exempt appropriate cases from compulsory mediation. Their argument is critical for a study of wife-initiated divorce because aggregate statistics cannot identify whether a particular claim involves violence. Mediation quality must therefore include safety assessment, informed participation, and referral to protection services rather than measuring success solely through reconciliation.

Post-divorce rights are equally important. Kholidah et al. (2023) demonstrate that inadequate recognition of maintenance and compensatory rights can produce continuing vulnerability. Patawari et al. (2026) identify a gap between formal rights and substantive protection for divorced wives. Increasing access to divorce should hence be matched by effective orders and enforcement concerning child maintenance, custody, contact, and other legally recognised obligations.

The regional findings support differentiated administrative responses. Aceh Utara, Aceh Tamiang, and Aceh Timur require attention because of their high caseloads. Aceh Jaya, Bener Meriah, and Aceh Barat merit investigation because of rapid relative growth. The objective should not be merely to reduce filed cases, as a lower number may also reflect barriers to justice. Policy should seek earlier conflict support, safe procedures, fair adjudication, and enforceable post-divorce protection.

Overall, the 2024–2025 dynamics reveal a broad but uneven increase in wife-initiated divorce. The findings are strongest as a map of administrative change and service demand. They do not establish individual motives or causal effects. Their principal contribution is to identify where changes are occurring and to demonstrate that provincial averages should not substitute for regional analysis.

The comparison also has implications for the interpretation of institutional performance. A rising number of cases does not by itself indicate that courts, mediators, or family-support institutions have failed. Increased registration may reflect greater public trust, reduced procedural barriers, improved recording, or stronger recognition that divorce must be processed formally to secure legal status and related rights. Conversely, a decline cannot automatically be treated as successful prevention because it may conceal barriers to filing, geographical constraints, informal separation, or settlement outside the court system.

Regional evaluation should therefore combine caseload statistics with information on access, mediation outcomes, case duration, legal aid, and implementation of judicial orders.

The findings also support a more precise understanding of prevention. Preventing harmful family breakdown is different from discouraging access to lawful divorce. Early intervention should strengthen communication, economic planning, parenting cooperation, and referral pathways before conflict becomes entrenched. When reconciliation is no longer safe or feasible, institutions should facilitate an orderly process that protects dignity, children's interests, and post-divorce rights. This distinction is particularly important in a setting where wife-initiated cases dominate, because policies that focus only on reducing filings may unintentionally restrict women's access to justice.

Finally, the short observation period requires institutional caution. Annual changes may be affected by case processing, reporting schedules, local administrative practice, or delayed issuance of divorce certificates. Continued monitoring using a longer series and consistent metadata would enable a more reliable assessment of whether the observed increase represents a sustained direction. Future official publications would be more analytically valuable if they cross-tabulated type of divorce with recorded cause, age, duration of marriage, number of children, mediation status, and the implementation of post-divorce obligations while maintaining privacy and data protection.

IV. CONCLUSION

Wife-initiated divorce in Aceh increased from 4,739 cases in 2024 to 5,206 in 2025 and continued to account for more than four fifths of all recorded divorces. The change was uneven: sixteen regions recorded increases, six recorded decreases, and one remained unchanged. Aceh Tamiang had the largest absolute increase, Aceh Jaya the highest relative growth, and Aceh Utara the largest 2025 caseload despite a decline. The distinction between volume, growth, and proportional dominance confirms that regional characteristics must guide interpretation and policy. The dominance of wife-initiated divorce does not establish women's responsibility for marital breakdown; rather, it demonstrates the extensive use of a legal mechanism through which wives seek dissolution and legal certainty. The findings support stronger family services and mediation that integrate religious guidance with assessment of relational conflict, economic pressure, maintenance, childcare, unequal power relations, and safety. Mahkamah Syar'iyah courts, KUA offices, local governments, and family-service institutions should use regional patterns to prioritise capacity, early assistance, rights protection, and enforcement. Further research should identify the circumstances specifically associated with wife-initiated divorce through disaggregated administrative data, systematic judgment analysis, or interviews with litigants and practitioners.

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