



Gender Equality Perspectives on Female Labor Force in West Bandung Regency

Yayang Hendri Subagja^{1*}

¹ UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung; subagjahendri@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Gender equality;
Female employment;
Socio-cultural issues.

Article history:

Received 2023-05-18

Revised 2023-06-22

Accepted 2023-10-22

ABSTRACT

Research conducted in West Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia, reveals that the challenges to achieving gender equality stem from differences in perspectives between men and women regarding rights, obligations, roles, and social status. One of these discussions often revolves around the issue of gender equality in the labor force, primarily concerning the rights and responsibilities guaranteed to Indonesian citizens by the 1945 Constitution. Gender equality in employment is both a governmental responsibility to protect citizens' rights and has cultural underpinnings. There still exist several institutional and socio-cultural barriers to improving gender equality in the workforce, including workers' awareness of their rights and the bargaining power of female employees. Therefore, it is believed that the government should play a crucial role in promoting gender equality by strengthening the enforcement of gender equality laws in the labor sector and enhancing labor market oversight. Furthermore, increasing awareness of gender equality among female workers and providing social protection for women in the informal sector is essential.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian yang dilakukan di Kabupaten Bandung Barat, Jawa Barat, Indonesia, mengungkapkan bahwa tantangan dalam mencapai kesetaraan gender berasal dari perbedaan pandangan antara pria dan wanita mengenai hak, kewajiban, peran, dan status sosial. Salah satu diskusi yang sering muncul berkaitan dengan isu kesetaraan gender dalam dunia kerja, terutama yang berkaitan dengan hak dan tanggung jawab yang dijamin kepada warga negara Indonesia dalam Undang-Undang Dasar 1945. Kesetaraan gender dalam pekerjaan adalah tanggung jawab pemerintah untuk melindungi hak-hak warganya dan memiliki akar budaya. Masih ada sejumlah hambatan institusional dan sosial-kultural dalam meningkatkan kesetaraan gender dalam dunia kerja, termasuk kesadaran pekerja akan hak-hak mereka dan kekuatan negosiasi pekerja perempuan. Oleh karena itu, dipercayai bahwa pemerintah harus memainkan peran penting dalam mempromosikan kesetaraan gender dengan memperkuat penegakan hukum kesetaraan gender di sektor ketenagakerjaan dan meningkatkan pengawasan pasar tenaga kerja. Selain itu, peningkatan kesadaran tentang kesetaraan gender di kalangan pekerja perempuan dan penyediaan perlindungan sosial bagi perempuan yang bekerja di sektor informal sangat penting.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



1. INTRODUCTION

The formation of the gender concept is a sociocultural process related to the division of roles and status between men and women in society. There is a common understanding in society that women's social roles are largely passive compared to men's and are not naturally occurring but constructed and shaped by cultural structures. The prevailing culture and norms in certain Indonesian communities tend to employ more women in household sectors than in the public sector, even though all Indonesian women have the choice to participate in the public sector.

The impact of economic growth increases job opportunities but does not automatically reduce gender inequality. Gender inequality in employment remains a topic of debate and a common issue. Differences between men and women in terms of time spent at home, variations in education and skills, sociocultural constraints, job segregation, and labor market access contribute to gender disparities in decent job participation.

Gender inequality in Indonesia, especially in the labor market, can be attributed to women's limited access to job opportunities compared to men. Women tend to work for lower wages than men, and female employees have limited opportunities to obtain positions similar to those held by men. The low female labor force participation rate (FLFP) in Indonesia is due to cultural factors and norms that still prevail among a majority of Indonesian communities, emphasizing traditional roles, which are considered more important than transitional roles. Women are often expected to take on the responsibility of caring for their families at home and are discouraged from entering the workforce. However, women can simultaneously play traditional roles as wives, mothers, and household heads, as well as transitional roles in work, community development, and participation.

Gender discrimination in the labor market arises due to prevalent misunderstandings and misconceptions in society regarding the concepts of disadvantage, dependency, biases, violence, and public pressure. Starting from the issue of gender equality in the labor sector that frequently occurs in Indonesia, this study outlines the scope of gender equality in the Indonesian labor market and the efforts required to enhance gender equality in this sector.

Terminologically, women's studies explain "gender" as a cultural concept used to distinguish the roles, behaviors, mentalities, and emotional characteristics between men and women that develop in society. Gender discussions have given rise to many evolving theories that serve as references in analyzing gender-related issues. Three initial theories about gender, as proposed by Edward Wilson of Harvard University (1975), are as follows: the nurture theory, the nature theory, and the equilibrium theory.

In educational theory, the debate about gender differences essentially results from strong sociocultural constructs that lead to differences in responsibilities and roles. These differences imply that women are consistently lagging behind and neglected in their contributions to choices of roles in society, business, and politics, and national roles tend to be unsupportive of women. The roles and contributions of women are recognized only in the household sector, and the public sector is considered the exclusive domain of men. Men are equated with the bourgeoisie, while women are associated with the proletariat dictatorship. The essence of this gender theory lies in the cultural constructs that differentiate social roles for men and women. Gender-based discrimination in social roles can be communicated, practiced, and enforced. One weakness of the nurture theory is the inability to create peace and harmony in family and community life, especially regarding gender inequality. According to this theory, it is not just women who acknowledge this, but men also perceive it as a reason and opportunity for these conditions. The term "fate" was deliberately coined to separate gender identities by proclaiming that men are strong and rational, while women are weak and emotional. The core of gender theory is rooted in the nature theory.

According to the natural sciences, gender differences between men and women are considered natural, unchanging, and universal. These biological differences provide indications that both genders have distinct roles and responsibilities. Some are not interchangeable due to differences in roles and tasks. Humans, women and men, have different qualities depending on their functions. This is because social life has the same division of labor as family life, and it is impossible for two captains to lead a ship. This theory starts with the model of family development and care.

Proponents of this theory have a functional understanding that accepts different roles as long as they are based on consensus (commitment) between men and women in the family or between women and men in social life.

According to the equilibrium theory, there is a concept of compromise known as balance, which emphasizes cooperation and harmony in relationships between women and men. This perspective remains consistent between women and men, who must work together and harmoniously in family life, in society, and in the nation. Therefore, the application of gender equality and justice is not based on calculations (quantities/norms) but on contextual issues (in specific places and at specific times) and situations, and is not universal.

In the realm of social sciences, the term “gender” was introduced by scholars to explain cultural differences (constructed and borrowed) inherent (God-given) between men and women. Gender represents differences in roles, functions, and responsibilities between men and women, stemming from social constructs and subject to change over time.

A number of previous research studies have contributed valuable insights to the discourse on gender and its contextualization in the Indonesian context. These studies include: *First*, “Contextualizing Gender, Islam, and Culture” authored by Siti Azizah, Abdillah Mustari, Himayah, and Ambo Masse from Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar. This work delves into the intricate interplay between gender, Islamic principles, and cultural influences. *Second*, “Men and Women with Different Identities: Gender Analysis and Political Perspectives from a Post-Feminist Perspective” by Nila Sastrawati, hailing from Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar. The study offers an insightful exploration of the varying identities and roles of men and women, employing a post-feminist perspective. *Third*, “Gender Concept and Theory” penned by Dra. Sri Sundari Sasongko, an expert from the National Family Planning Coordination Board (BKKBN). The book primarily focuses on elucidating the fundamental concepts and theories pertaining to gender, casting light on their implications. *Fourth*, “Women Workers from a Gender Perspective in West Nusa Tenggara” authored by Bq. Ari Yusrini, affiliated with the State Islamic University (UIN) Mataram. This research extends its scrutiny to women in the workforce within the specific context of West Nusa Tenggara, employing a gender-focused lens. *Fifth*, “Analysis of Gender Equality in Employment in Indonesia,” a comprehensive investigation conducted by Yeni Nuraeni and Ivan Lilin Suryono, who are associated with the Center for Labor Policy Development within the Ministry of Labor, Indonesia. This research study is instrumental in evaluating the status of gender equality within the Indonesian employment landscape.

The research conducted in West Bandung Regency, Indonesia, aims to explore and address the challenges and perspectives surrounding gender equality in the labor force. This research delves into the complex web of sociocultural factors that influence the division of roles, responsibilities, and rights between men and women in Indonesian society, particularly within the context of the labor market. It seeks to identify the institutional and sociocultural barriers that hinder the achievement of gender equality, shedding light on the roles of the government in enforcing gender equality laws and promoting awareness among female workers. The ultimate goal of this research is to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of gender issues in the labor sector and to propose strategies and policies that can enhance gender equality, as well as ensure social protection for women in the informal labor sector.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a literature review method, which involves extracting and collecting data by reading and recording information from previous studies. The nature of the data gathered in this literature review is qualitative, consisting of written text. The use of gender analysis is a method or tool to reveal gender differences by providing data, facts, and information about gender. In other words, data is categorized by males and females in terms of access, roles, control, and benefits (Madhiya, 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Gender Equality in Cultural Society

Gender inequality is driven by the strong belief that boys and girls hold different values in most societies. In this perspective, boys are considered more important and valuable than girls. Boys are expected to become the leaders of the family in all aspects, not just financially (Saguni, 2020).

As a result, family resources are consistently allocated to the education of boys rather than girls. The higher a boy's level of education, the higher his value and status in society. In culture, women are often viewed as domestic beings with very limited freedom of movement. It's not surprising that women are more affected by poverty and illiteracy.

Reviewing all aspects of women's lives and the work they do, whether productive, reproductive, private, or public, and rejecting efforts to classify family and family work as undervalued. The women's approach to development is well-known. It has evolved from the critique of women (WID) in development. This approach understands women's development goals in terms of independence and inner strength.

In the next phase, the gender mainstreaming approach (GAD) was developed. This approach emphasizes the transformation of development agendas, rethinking development paradigms and priorities, altering sector agendas, and mechanisms of accountability and participation that provide data on gender inequality or differences in local contexts. Improvements through the use of gender analysis (Martiany, 2011). In this way, development

priorities are automatically revealed, with a focus on the causes of women's alienation and their commitment to changing the existing social conditions.

The emergence of gender differences is related to many factors: differences in gender understanding through education, socialization, empowerment, and even cultural social constructs, even through religious and national teachings, are related to their formation. After a long process, gender socialization is ultimately considered God's will. God's preservation is biological, unchangeable, and is considered to be male and female.

However, using the guideline that each characteristic is usually associated with a specific gender, as long as those characteristics can be interchanged, they are the result of community development and not natural (ROCHMAH, 2007).

Gender and gender roles tend to offer opportunities that go unachieved, lack wealth and other resources, political power, education, health, and a decent life in all areas of life. Gender roles are built on the basic biological components we have since birth, but class, race, skin color, religion, caste, and nationality are lives in which a woman has a relationship with a man in determining equal opportunities. The same background (Arniati, 2020).

Cultural barriers that hinder the education and outcomes of girls and boys need to be thoroughly studied. Because cultural practices such as segregation and sexism often lead girls to drop out of school. In many societies, parents find it less advantageous to educate their daughters than their sons. How to address cultural norms that hinder women and how to encourage parents to educate their daughters. Many of these questions need to be contemplated. Gender equality places women and men on an equal footing. However, gender equality means not recognizing male superiority over females. Gender equality means giving women the same opportunities as men.

3.2. Government Policies on Gender Equality and Justice for Female Labor

The government participates in the enactment of laws on gender equality and gender equality that protect female workers and ensure that workers receive fair rights and work safely and comfortably. Gender equality is equal treatment between men and women in obtaining opportunities, participation, or participation and decision-making, as well as the development of welfare and social affordability. Gender equality means that men and women have equal opportunities and human rights to participate in political, economic, sociocultural, defense and national security activities and enjoy the consequences of such development equally (2000) Presidential Regulation No. 9 (Azisah et al., 2016).

Gender equality is the process of obtaining fair status, roles, or statuses for men and women. To achieve gender equality, men and women are treated the same or differently, depending on their needs. Gender justice is a process that is not biased toward men and women but is equal (Presidential Regulation No. 9 of 2000) (Azisah et al., 2016).

Gender equality can be achieved in many ways, including government actions. From the central to regional levels, various government policies have been implemented, accompanied by the drafting of laws that can ensure the achievement of gender equality and justice. Social welfare for the entire Indonesian people.

- a. The 1945 Constitution
- b. Republic of Indonesia Law No. 1987. Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Article 27: "All citizens have equal rights and obligations."
- c. Presidential Decree Number 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development.
- d. Minister of Home Affairs Number 132 of 2003 concerning General Guidelines for the Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in Regional Development.
- e. Labor Law No. 13 of 2003. This includes restrictions on female workers. The discussion of labor is stated in Article 1 paragraph (1) of Law Number 13 of 2003. "Employment means everything related to work before, during, and after working hours." Article 13 (2) of the Labor Law 2003 states that workers are "individuals who can work to produce goods and services that meet their needs and the needs of society." The definition of labor in Law 13 of 2003 is an expansion of the definition of labor in Law 14 of 1969 with the provisions of the Basic Labor Regulations. Working from home means working outside the company to produce products and services that meet the needs of society.

The definition of female workers can be summarized as women who can work both inside and outside of employment and create products and services that meet their needs and the needs of society. The number of female workers in Indonesia The role of women in national economic development is increasingly receiving attention. According to the data gathered, the number of female workers in most parts of Indonesia is more than half the number of male workers. There is a high demand for female workers.

3.3. Conditions of Female Labor in West Bandung Regency

Based on data obtained from the Indonesian labor and transmigration agency, in 2019 the number of female workers from West Bandung Regency was 310 out of a total of 571 people. This is more fully described in the following table:

Table 1. Number of Indonesian Workers from West Bandung Regency from 2014-2019

Kab. Bandung Barat	Laki-laki	Perempuan	Jumlah
2014	484	1351	1835
2015	306	701	1007
2016	258	390	648
2017	63	259	322
2019	261	310	571

Source: West Java Labor and Transmigration Service 2019

Various factors motivate individuals to work abroad and become those who leave their home country. Becoming a worker, or abbreviated as TKW, is not an easy task. Working in a foreign country with many cultural differences requires stages. The lack of labor demand in Indonesia is one reason why many people choose to become TKWs, both legally and illegally. Geographically, West Bandung is surrounded by mountains, so most of its population works in agriculture. Agrarian communities have a very prominent division of labor, and there is no gender difference to separate production and breeding because living and living environments are integrated into one environment. This way, there are specific male jobs such as farming and livestock farming, and specific female jobs such as planting and harvesting agricultural products, but farming groups have the flexibility to divide roles between men and women. However, if farmers tend to take care of the land rather than own it, inequality arises. As for the economic class, wives contribute to meeting their needs by becoming female workers, as they belong to the middle class and make an economic difference by meeting their living needs and demands. In general, the reasons for becoming a TKW are as follows:

First, seeking a high salary. In general, people will look for jobs that offer high salaries and are quickly to meet or improve family economic conditions. And women participate here by becoming female workers. From a salary perspective, being a TKW can be many times higher than Indonesia's UMP (minimum wage) or UMR (regional minimum wage).

Second, looking for work experience. It goes without saying that if you want a job that offers more than UMP or UMR, you will be interested and do not need work experience in the same field. To become a TKW, you usually do not need work experience because you are trained before going to work in the country and provide skills to work in the chosen discipline.

Third, looking for a life partner. For female workers, this can increase their chances of having a foreign life partner. People in the Middle East, Europe, and America are attractive to anyone looking for a foreign life partner. In addition to improving the economy, someone is very ambitious to become a female worker, but it is not impossible to try their luck in finding a life partner abroad.

Four, gender Equality Perspective in Female Labor. Social constructs influence the beliefs and culture of society about how men and women should think and act according to social rules. It is no wonder that all aspects of political, business, and other fields are dominated by men, as women are often considered weak and powerless. In the end, this division of labor is more advantageous for men because the physical and psychological differences between men and women also determine their respective roles in society, and men are considered strong bodies. Women lag behind men in all areas of public life. Women are equal to all domestic activities.

In some cultures, women may be in a lower position than men. Most people also have the same view that the way to be a man or a woman is a natural consequence of being born biologically as a man or a woman. Society produces these divisive behaviors to distinguish between men and women based on what they feel is necessary. This view means that female participation is very low.

The increasing cost of living has forced women to bear the financial burden of their families. Urgent needs can break down established gender traditions and prejudices. Women in rural areas have experienced the same. Due to their low formal education, they only work in the informal sector, which is as housewives. The tremendous financial burden forces women, who were originally housewives, to work abroad. Comparing the very high wages of Indonesia and overseas, working as a manual worker (TKW) is an alternative to improving the financial well-being of the family. So far, economic factors have been the primary cause of female migration abroad, but in social reality, the role of husbands also plays a significant role in decision-making, making women breadwinners more dominant. The position and role of men, who should be the main breadwinners for the family, are gradually being

replaced by the presence of women working abroad. In nominal terms, the income generated by both parties is very different. The lack of female participation in the agricultural sector is based on the assumption that the job requires large and strong physical labor. Young mothers prefer to find alternative jobs that are easier and less demanding, such as working abroad as workers. With the increasing cost of living, women have to share the financial burden of their families. Urgent needs can break down gender traditions and biases. There must be an alternative that can solve family financial problems. One of the options is to become a female worker abroad. In Indonesia, in particular, there is an imbalance between the number of workers and job opportunities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In order to achieve gender equality for women who become Female Labor Workers (TKWs) working inside and outside the country, the government needs to play a role in gender equality by enforcing laws related to gender equality in the field of employment. Labor supervision systems have been strengthened. It is the government's responsibility to protect the rights of the people.

The reasons for working as a TKW are high income, job search, and looking for a life partner. In terms of poverty factors, becoming a Female Labor Worker (TKW) overcomes the social and economic pressures of rural family and establishes the social status of rural communities or villages, whose social status is usually measured by material. The motivator for women in West Bandung Regency to improve their standard of living, such as owning a large personal home, a personal car, land, jewelry, and other things that can be shown to others.

References

- Arniati, I. A. K. (2020). *Pandangan Gender Pada Smerti Dalam Perkembangan Modern*.
- Azisah, S., Mustari, A., Masse, A., Kara, S. A., Babcock, T., Dzuhayatin, R., Bertulfo, L., Hasyim, S., & Jaharuddin, W. (2016). *Kontekstualisasi Gender, Islam dan Budaya*. Makassar: Alauddin University Press.
- Madhiya, N. (2021). *Perspektif Gender dalam Tafsir Kontemporer*.
- Martiany, D. (2011). Implementasi Pengarusutamaan Gender (PUG) Sebagai Strategi Pencapaian Kesetaraan Gender (Studi di Provinsi Sumatera Utara dan Jawa Tengah). *Aspirasi: Jurnal Masalah-Masalah Sosial*, 2(2), 121–136.
- Mulia, S. M. (2015). Muslim family law reform in Indonesia (A progressive interpretation of the Qur an). *Al-Mawarid Journal of Islamic Law*, 15(1), 42613.
- Nuraeni, Y., & Suryono, I. L. (2021). Analisis Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Bidang Ketenagakerjaan Di Indonesia. *Nakhoda: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan*, 20(1), 68–79.
- ROCHMAH, A. M. (2007). *Mansour Fakh dan Transformasi Sosial Studi Pemikiran Mansour Fakh mengenai Transformasi Sosial di Indonesia*. Fisipol UGM Jurusan Ilmu Pemerintahan.
- Saguni, F. (2020). Dinamika Gender Dalam Masyarakat. *Musawa: Journal for Gender Studies*, 12(2), 207–227.
- Santrock, J. W. (2002). *Life-span development*.
- Sasongko, S. S. (2009). *Konsep dan Teori gender*. Jakarta: BKkbn.
- Sastrawati, N. (2018). *Laki-Laki dan Perempuan Identitas Berbedah Analisis Gender dan Politik Perspektif Post-Feminisme*.
- Yusrini, B. A. (2017). Tenaga kerja wanita dalam perspektif gender di Nusa Tenggara Barat. *AL-MAIYYAH: Media Transformasi Gender Dalam Paradigma Sosial Keagamaan*, 10(1), 115–131.