

THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN WITHIN THE PATRIARCHAL CULTURE OF THE KEEROM INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This study is oriented toward a critical analysis of the construction of patriarchal culture and its implications for gender inequality within the social life of Indigenous communities in Keerom Regency, Papua. Gender inequality is manifested through various forms of women's subordination, including violence against women and children, customary marriage practices that restrict women's educational continuity, and the limited participation of women in customary and social decision-making processes. Employing a critical paradigm and a qualitative case study approach, this study explores women's lived experiences, forms of resistance to patriarchal domination, and empowerment strategies developed in response to gender-based power relations. Data are collected through observation, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and documentation. The data are subsequently analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data credibility is strengthened through triangulation. Theoretically, this study integrates the perspectives of radical feminism, cultural feminism, and community empowerment to develop a contextually grounded model of Indigenous women's empowerment. The proposed model is expected to strengthen women's participation, educational access, legal protection, and institutional transformation toward a more inclusive and gender-equitable Indigenous social order.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Empowerment, Keerom, Gender Inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality remains a significant global issue and continues to receive considerable attention in social science discourse and development policy. Many countries continue to face substantial challenges in achieving gender equality and justice, particularly due to deeply embedded patriarchal ideologies within social, cultural, political, and institutional structures. Patriarchy constructs power relations that tend to position women in subordinate roles and represent them as *the other* within a social order predominantly shaped by male authority. From a critical perspective, patriarchy should not merely be understood as a localized cultural phenomenon, but rather as a social system that is continuously produced and reproduced through strategic institutions, including the family, religion, customary institutions, education, and the state. Such conditions consequently restrict women's

access, participation, control, and representation, particularly in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives and interests.

Within this context, gender studies have developed as a critical approach to identifying, analyzing, and deconstructing the structures and mechanisms that perpetuate unequal gender relations. A critical feminist perspective is particularly relevant because it not only seeks to identify various forms of women's subordination and marginalization but also examines how patriarchal power relations are constructed, maintained, and reproduced within social life. Furthermore, this perspective positions women's empowerment as an essential component of social transformation through strengthening women's capacities, participation, access to resources, and involvement in decision-making processes.

In Indonesia, efforts to achieve gender equality have demonstrated relatively positive progress in recent years. Data from Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*—BPS) indicate that Indonesia's Gender Inequality Index (GII) stood at 0.447 in 2023, representing a decrease of 0.012 points from 0.459 in 2022. This downward trend has occurred consistently since 2019, with an average decline of approximately 0.010 points per year. Over the five-year period, Indonesia's GII decreased cumulatively by 0.052 points, indicating improvements across several dimensions of gender inequality. Nevertheless, achievements at the national level do not necessarily reflect the complexity of gender inequality at the local level, particularly within Indigenous communities characterized by diverse social and cultural structures. A more detailed overview of the development of Indonesia's Gender Inequality Index is presented in the following diagram.



Figure 1. Trend of Indonesia's Gender Inequality Index (GII), 2018–2023

Based on the data presented in the figure above, the development of Indonesia's Gender Inequality Index (GII) demonstrates an increasingly positive trend. The consistent decline in the GII from year to year indicates progress in reducing gender disparities at the national level. Nevertheless, this achievement does not necessarily reflect an equitable condition across all regions of Indonesia. Gender inequality continues to exhibit disparities among provinces, influenced by differences in social, economic, and cultural conditions, access to education and public services, as well as

Province	2022	2023
ACEH	0.49	0.48
BANJAR BARAT	0.44	0.43
BANJAR NEgara BARAT	0.43	0.41
BALI	0.54	0.51
JABAR	0.53	0.50
BANJAR NEgara SELATAN	0.48	0.46
KEPulauan BANGKALA	0.47	0.45
KBT. BANJAR NEgara SELATAN	0.49	0.47
LAMPUNG	0.47	0.45
KEPulauan LAMPUNG	0.37	0.34
KEPulauan MALANGKA	0.32	0.29
JAWA BARAT	0.48	0.45
DI. YOGYAKARTA	0.35	0.31
JAWA TIMUR	0.25	0.21
KABUPATEN	0.45	0.43
BELU	0.49	0.46
NUSA TENGARA BARAT	0.63	0.61
NUSA TENGARA TIMUR	0.43	0.41
KABUPATEN BANTEN	0.51	0.49
KALIMANTAN BARAT	0.54	0.51
KALIMANTAN SELATAN	0.50	0.48
KALIMANTAN UTARA	0.47	0.45
KALIMANTAN TIMUR	0.46	0.44
KALIMANTAN TENGAH	0.46	0.44
SULAWESI BARAT	0.47	0.45
SULAWESI TENGAH	0.38	0.35
SULAWESI SELATAN	0.38	0.35
SULAWESI UTARA	0.47	0.45
GORONTALO	0.41	0.39
SULAWESI BARAT	0.48	0.46
MAKLUK	0.51	0.49
MAKLUK UTARA	0.54	0.51
PAPUA BARAT	0.61	0.59
PAPUA	0.63	0.61

Note: The lower the value of the Gender Inequality Index (GII), the better the achievement of gender equality.
Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS), 2024

al aggregate data, however, conceal substantial and c

The condition of women in Papua reflects multidimensional and systemic forms of oppression. Various reports indicate that violence against Papuan women remains prevalent and occurs in multiple forms, including physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence (Wandita & Yolanda, 2017). Patriarchal ideology within Papuan society operates through customary institutions that frequently restrict women's participation and voice in decision-making processes. Within the social structure of Indigenous communities, women are often positioned at a secondary or tertiary level, subordinate to men who predominantly occupy decision-making spaces. Certain customary practices, including marriages arranged entirely by parents and accompanied by bridewealth payments, may further position women as objects within economic transactions. Papuan women also encounter limited access to education due to cultural

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expectations that confine them to domestic roles. Low educational attainment is closely associated with limited gender literacy, thereby making it increasingly difficult for women to overcome persistent cycles of oppression and marginalization.

Keerom Regency represents one of the areas in Papua where gender-related challenges are particularly significant. Forms of gender injustice include violence, subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, and the double burden experienced by women. Data on violence in Keerom Regency indicate a concerning trend (Wandita & Yolanda, 2017). In 2013, only 11 cases of violence against women and children were recorded; this figure increased substantially to 34 cases in 2014, 41 cases in 2015, and 47 cases in 2016. Although the number declined to 32 cases in 2017, it subsequently increased to 36 cases in 2018 and reached its highest recorded level of 51 cases in 2019.

Beyond physical violence, structural inequality is also evident in women's participation in employment. Based on employment status, male workers predominate across almost all major employment categories, except among unpaid workers, the majority of whom are women (BPS Kabupaten Keerom, 2022). In 2021, male workers were predominantly self-employed, employees, and employers assisted by temporary or unpaid workers, accounting for 30.15%, 29.40%, and 26.63%, respectively. In contrast, 51.36% of female workers were classified as unpaid workers, followed by self-employed workers at 23.31% and employees at 17.32%.

A similar disparity is evident in education. According to data published by BPS Kabupaten Keerom (2022), 41.09% of males aged 15 years and above had completed senior secondary education or its equivalent, compared with 40.12% of females. Moreover, the proportion of females aged 15 years and above without an educational certificate was higher, at 16.43%, compared with 12.25% among males. These figures indicate the persistence of gender disparities in educational attainment and access within Keerom Regency.

Gender injustice against women is also reflected in patriarchal cultural structures. Women are frequently positioned in subordinate roles and associated with restrictive gender expectations, such as domestic responsibilities and stereotypical notions of femininity, while receiving limited recognition in decision-making, ownership, and access to resources. Such conditions contribute to marginalization, subordination, negative stereotyping, double workloads, and vulnerability to violence (Zuhraeni, 2017). Women's access to natural resources and customary land is also constrained because customary law provides limited recognition of their participation in these domains (Wandita & Yolanda, 2017). In Waris District, the practice of exchange marriage (*kawin tukar*) persists and may compel girls of primary-school age to discontinue their education in order to comply with customary obligations. Within this practice, women may be exchanged in lieu of bridewealth obligations borne by male relatives, such as brothers or uncles. Such practices not only restrict women's right to education but also position them as objects of exchange within the customary economic system.

Consequently, the number of women pursuing higher levels of education remains considerably lower than that of men due to restrictive cultural expectations.

Previous studies demonstrate that patriarchal structures are closely intertwined with cultural systems. Research on Papuan women has contributed significantly to understanding the multiple dimensions of women's experiences of systematic oppression through strongly patriarchal customary and religious institutions. According to Choer (2025), patriarchal ideology constitutes a dominant structural issue affecting various dimensions of social life. In the Papuan context, patriarchy also contributes to ecological crises and the exploitation of customary forests, while Indigenous women have limited opportunities to participate in political decision-making concerning ecological governance. Patriarchal ideology can restrict women's rights and freedoms through values embedded in social, economic, and cultural structures. Salehuddin et al. (2024), in their study of patriarchal cultural values in Biak, demonstrate that opportunities to challenge patriarchal structures can be strengthened through empowerment strategies supported by policies emphasizing education, justice, and human rights.

Although Papuan women play significant roles in religious activities, they are often positioned primarily as listeners and have limited authority in decision-making processes. Studies of sociocultural change have also demonstrated its influence on women's economic empowerment in Papua's coastal areas. In recent decades, Papuan women's movements have become increasingly active through the establishment of various organizations advocating for women's human rights. Nevertheless, existing studies have generally remained descriptive and have not sufficiently employed critical approaches capable of examining the mechanisms through which patriarchal ideology operates. The ways in which patriarchy is maintained and institutionalized through strategic social institutions have therefore not been adequately investigated. Furthermore, studies integrating critical feminist theory with the specific context of Indigenous Papuan communities remain limited. Addressing this research gap is essential because, without a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that perpetuate oppression, women's empowerment initiatives may struggle to achieve sustainable structural transformation.

A critical feminist approach provides an appropriate theoretical framework for this study for several fundamental reasons. First, it extends beyond identifying gender inequality by critically examining the ideological roots of patriarchy embedded within the social structures of Indigenous communities. Second, critical feminist theory enables an analysis of how patriarchal power operates through strategic institutions, including the family, customary institutions, religion, education, and the state, thereby positioning women in subordinate roles. Third, this approach is emancipatory and oriented toward empowerment and social transformation in pursuit of gender justice. Fourth, critical feminist theory recognizes the intersectional nature of women's

oppression, including its relationship with class, race, ethnicity, and culture, which may produce multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage for Papuan women. Fifth, this approach provides space for women's voices and recognizes their lived experiences as an important source of knowledge for understanding social realities. Finally, critical feminist theory extends beyond theoretical analysis by providing a practical foundation for transformative social intervention. Through this approach, the study seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of how patriarchal ideology operates in Keerom Regency and to formulate contextually appropriate empowerment strategies for advancing gender justice.

The focus on Keerom Regency is based on the urgency of gender inequality within the region. According to Wandita and Yolanda (2017), the exchange marriage system contributes to women's limited access to formal education. Women are particularly vulnerable to early marriage due to customary obligations associated with this practice. In addition, the system allows a male relative of the bride to marry a woman from the groom's family, thereby eliminating bridewealth payments between the two families, a practice locally understood as *impas*. The substantial increase in recorded cases of violence, from 11 cases in 2013 to 51 cases in 2019, indicates a structural problem requiring serious attention (Ali, 2021). The "iceberg phenomenon" identified by the Vice Regent of Keerom further suggests that the actual magnitude of the problem may be considerably greater than indicated by officially recorded cases. The continuing practice of exchange marriage in Waris District further demonstrates the persistence of patriarchal structures within Indigenous communities.

Preliminary observations further reinforce evidence of gender inequality within institutional and governmental settings. At the researcher's workplace, of the 47 employees within the government office, only three are Indigenous women originating from Keerom Regency. This limited representation indicates that the participation of Indigenous women from Keerom in the workforce remains considerably lower than that of male workers and women originating from outside the regency. Based on the preceding discussion, several fundamental issues concerning gender inequality and the oppression of women in Keerom Regency can be identified. First, Papua's Gender Inequality Index reaches nearly 0.60, exceeding the national reference threshold of 0.45. Second, recorded cases of violence against women and children in Keerom Regency increased substantially from 11 cases in 2013 to 51 cases in 2019. Third, the practice of exchange marriage in Waris District continues to affect girls' educational opportunities. Fourth, Papuan women have limited participation and voice in customary decision-making and are often positioned below men within prevailing social structures. Fifth, patriarchal ideology continues to be maintained and reproduced through strategic social institutions, particularly the family, customary institutions, and religion.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm to develop an in-depth understanding of patriarchal culture and its implications for women's empowerment within Indigenous communities in Keerom Regency, Papua. The qualitative approach is appropriate because social reality is understood not merely as an objective phenomenon governed by theoretical assumptions, but as a reality constructed, interpreted, and given meaning by individuals as active social actors. According to Moleong (2021), qualitative research enables researchers to understand complex social realities through direct interaction with informants and sensitivity to diverse values and experiences. Similarly, Creswell (2013) emphasizes that qualitative research is intended to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems. Accordingly, the constructivist paradigm provides an appropriate framework for examining how Indigenous women interpret their experiences within gender relations and how patriarchal ideology is constructed and reproduced in the social and cultural life of Keerom communities.

The study focuses on four interrelated dimensions: analyzing how patriarchal ideology operates across various aspects of Indigenous community life; identifying forms of gender inequality, subordination, and oppression experienced by women; exploring the social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors that contribute to the persistence and reproduction of patriarchal practices; and formulating women's empowerment strategies capable of promoting structural transformation toward gender justice. The research is conducted in Keerom Regency, Papua, based on considerations of accessibility and the relevance of the region to the research problem. Furthermore, the literature review indicates that studies specifically integrating an analysis of patriarchal structures with strategies for empowering Indigenous women within the same focus and research setting in Keerom Regency remain limited. Therefore, this location provides a relevant context for developing a comprehensive understanding of women's experiences within Indigenous social and cultural structures.

The study utilizes **primary and secondary data sources**. Primary data are obtained directly through field research from informants selected using *snowball sampling*, beginning with key informants possessing relevant knowledge and experience concerning gender relations, patriarchal culture, and women's empowerment. The number of informants is determined progressively according to data adequacy and research needs. Informants represent diverse community and governmental perspectives, including customary and religious leaders, community leaders, women's activists, academics, female politicians, housewives, traders, agricultural laborers, teachers, and civil servants within the Keerom Regency Government. Secondary data are derived from official documents, statistical publications, government reports, previous studies, regional monographs, and relevant institutional records. The data are predominantly qualitative, encompassing narratives,

lived experiences, perceptions, interpretations, social practices, and meanings related to gender relations and patriarchal structures. These data provide insights into women's experiences of gender-based roles, participation in decision-making, access to resources, discrimination, subordination, and customary practices. Secondary quantitative data, including demographic statistics, educational indicators, employment data, and records of violence against women, are used as contextual evidence to strengthen and support the interpretation of qualitative findings.

Data collection is conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, *Focus Group Discussions* (FGDs), and document analysis. Observation is undertaken to examine women's activities within families, customary institutions, governmental institutions, and various economic, social, and cultural settings. It also focuses on physical and sociocultural environments related to gender relations and patriarchal practices. In-depth interviews are conducted using structured and open-ended formats, allowing flexibility according to the characteristics and experiences of each informant. Interviews are intended to explore personal experiences, perspectives, interpretations, and knowledge concerning women's social positions and mechanisms through which patriarchal culture is reproduced. FGDs are employed to obtain collective perspectives regarding women's issues and patriarchy within Keerom communities. Each FGD consists of no more than 15 participants to ensure intensive and productive interaction. Participants are selected from diverse social backgrounds to generate a broad range of perspectives concerning gender inequality and women's empowerment.

Document analysis is conducted to complement and verify information obtained through observations, interviews, and FGDs. Relevant documents are collected from institutions with authority and expertise related to the research topic, including Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*—BPS), government agencies responsible for women's empowerment and child protection, university research institutions, district and village governments, and research and development institutions in Keerom Regency. The documents include statistical data, institutional reports, policy documents, activity reports, previous research findings, regional monographs, and other materials concerning gender, women, and Indigenous sociocultural practices. Combining these data collection techniques is intended to produce comprehensive information and facilitate cross-validation of findings from different sources.

Data analysis is conducted systematically and continuously from data collection to the formulation of conclusions by applying the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (2014), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involves selecting, focusing, categorizing, and simplifying information according to the major themes of the study, including gender relations, women's subordination and marginalization, mechanisms of patriarchal reproduction, access to resources, participation in decision-making, and empowerment strategies. The reduced data are subsequently organized and presented through descriptive

narratives, thematic categories, matrices, and tables where appropriate. Data display enables the researcher to identify patterns, relationships among categories, differences in perspectives, and meanings emerging from participants' experiences while maintaining the sociocultural context in which those experiences occur.

The final analytical stage involves conclusion drawing and verification, which are undertaken continuously throughout the research process. Empirical findings are interpreted in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework to explain how patriarchal culture is constructed, maintained, and reproduced and how women develop strategies for empowerment and social transformation. The trustworthiness of the findings is strengthened through source and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants and cross-checking interview findings with observations, FGDs, and documentary evidence. Perspectives from Indigenous women, customary and religious leaders, women's activists, academics, and government officials are compared to ensure that findings are not based on a single perspective. Through systematic analysis and triangulation, the study is expected to generate credible and comprehensive findings and provide an empirical foundation for developing contextual, participatory, and transformative strategies for empowering Indigenous women toward gender justice in Keerom Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This Results and Discussion section is structured around the research focus on the operation of patriarchal ideology, the factors that sustain gender injustice, and strategies for empowering Indigenous women in Keerom Regency. This focus is consistent with the objectives of the study, namely to identify the mechanisms through which patriarchy operates in Indigenous communities, analyze the factors that reproduce gender inequality, and formulate transformative strategies toward a gender-equitable society. Since the available materials do not yet contain interview transcripts, FGD results, observation notes, or completed questionnaires, the following discussion does not generate fictitious quotations or field-based statistics. Instead, the empirical discussion is derived from available documentary data and previous studies, while interviews, observations, and FGDs are positioned as interpretive categories that can be further developed once actual field data are obtained.

1. The Operation of Patriarchal Ideology in Indigenous Community Life

The analysis indicates that patriarchy should be understood as a multidimensional system of power relations rather than merely as male domination within the family. Within the framework of this study, patriarchal ideology is assumed to operate through six major domains: the domestic/family sphere, sociocultural and customary institutions, the economy, religion, education, and politics and decision-making. These domains provide an analytical framework for identifying manifestations of gender inequality in the everyday lives of Indigenous communities in Keerom.

Within the domestic sphere, kinship systems and gender-based divisions of roles may create structures that primarily position women within reproductive and domestic functions. You's (2019) study of Hubula women among the Dani people demonstrates that customary constructions assign men to customary activities and warfare, while women are responsible for gardening, livestock, household duties, and childcare. When such divisions develop into hierarchical relationships, women are not simply performing different roles but are placed in subordinate positions.

These findings provide a relevant analytical lens for understanding Keerom. Differences in the division of labor do not automatically constitute gender injustice. Problems arise when these divisions create inequalities in access, control, benefits, and decision-making. From a gender-analysis perspective, women's and men's roles are socially and culturally constructed and may therefore change according to place, time, and social structure. Consequently, gender roles regarded as inherited traditions require critical examination when they result in women's marginalization or subordination.

Within customary and sociocultural domains, patriarchy may operate through the legitimization of customary norms and authority. The research materials specifically identify the practice of exchange marriage (*kawin tukar*), restrictions on women's educational access, and women's exclusion from customary decision-making as concrete issues requiring further field investigation. From a critical perspective, such practices should not be viewed solely as traditions but must also be analyzed in terms of their consequences for women's rights, autonomy, education, and social position.

From a radical feminist perspective, these conditions may be interpreted as manifestations of patriarchal structures in which the family, marriage, customary institutions, education, and public life function as arenas for reproducing gender-based power. Radical feminism emphasizes that women's subordination is not a natural condition but is produced and maintained through social structures. Accordingly, physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence should not be interpreted merely as individual acts but also examined in relation to the structures that allow unequal power relations to persist.

2. Women's Marginalization in the Economic Dimension

The economic dimension is particularly important because Indigenous women may make substantial contributions to household survival without necessarily having equal access to or control over economic resources. Literature concerning Keerom communities indicates that traditional economic systems continue to be influenced by customary practices and values transmitted across generations. Sanggenafa (2020) found that the traditional economic system of Indigenous Keerom communities maintains local economic values and particular patterns of labor division. These findings provide an important context for further examining whether traditional divisions of labor have different implications for women and men.

Economic transformation has also generated new challenges. Siriwa et al. (2024) found that the expansion of oil palm plantations in Keerom has altered customary land ownership systems and contributed to a transition from subsistence-based livelihoods to wage-based economic arrangements. These changes have been accompanied by inequalities between landowners and non-landowners and between local communities and migrants. From a gender perspective, this transformation raises important questions regarding who holds land rights, who receives compensation, who controls household income, and to what extent women participate in economic decision-making.

The analysis therefore suggests that women's economic empowerment cannot be limited to increasing income. Pahri (2017), for example, identified two forms of economic empowerment among Indigenous Papuan women through capital assistance and training. Their effects extended beyond economic improvement to greater mobility, purchasing capacity, participation in household decision-making, and increased legal and political awareness. Thus, economic empowerment should encompass both access to and control over resources.

3. Education, Knowledge, and the Reproduction of Gender Inequality

Education represents a strategic dimension because it is directly associated with women's capacity to understand their rights, obtain employment, participate in decision-making, and strengthen their bargaining position. Within this study, restrictions on women's education are not treated solely as individual problems but as part of broader social structures that may reproduce inequality across generations. Educational access therefore constitutes both an analytical dimension and a major target of women's empowerment.

When women have fewer educational opportunities, the consequences may extend into economic, political, legal, and social spheres. Educational limitations can reduce access to formal employment and information about rights while simultaneously weakening women's ability to participate equally in decision-making forums. Therefore, education should not be assessed solely in terms of formal educational attainment but also through access to information, gender literacy, legal knowledge, economic skills, and the capacity to articulate aspirations.

This perspective is consistent with the empowerment theory of Ife and Tesoriero, which positions knowledge and information as essential components of empowerment. Knowledge enables marginalized groups to understand their circumstances, recognize alternatives, and make more autonomous decisions. Consequently, critical gender education for both women and men may function as an instrument for transforming perspectives that normalize gender inequality.

4. Women's Exclusion from Decision-Making

Another significant dimension concerns women's participation in customary, social, political, and governmental decision-making. Patriarchal structures become

more firmly established when authority to define community interests is concentrated within one gender group. Numerical representation alone is therefore insufficient. More importantly, women must have opportunities to speak, influence agendas, articulate their interests, and exercise meaningful authority in decision-making processes.

Community empowerment theory provides a strong analytical foundation for examining this issue. Ife and Tesoriero conceptualize empowerment as increasing the capacity of disadvantaged groups to access and control resources and determine the direction of their own lives. Their dimensions of power include personal choice, human rights, the definition of needs, ideas, institutions, economic resources, reproduction, and social processes.

Accordingly, Indigenous women's participation must progress from symbolic presence toward substantive participation. Women should not merely be invited to customary or development forums; they need opportunities to speak, propose agendas, articulate their needs, influence discussions, and participate in final decisions. Formal participation without meaningful influence may leave existing power relations unchanged.

5. Women as Subjects and Agents of Transformation

The findings do not position women solely as groups experiencing subordination. Literature concerning Papua also demonstrates women's capacity to develop resistance and collective action. Sulastri et al. (2021), in their study of the Indigenous Women's Organization (*Organisasi Perempuan Adat—OPRA*) among the Namblong people, found that experiences of violence and injustice may generate collective awareness among women to advocate for their rights. Indigenous identity can therefore become an organizational foundation for defending women's rights while simultaneously protecting customary land, natural resources, and cultural heritage.

This finding is important because it shifts the analytical position of women from being merely "victims" to becoming agents of social transformation. Cultural feminism reinforces this perspective by emphasizing values such as care, cooperation, empathy, social responsibility, and nonviolent conflict resolution as social resources that can contribute to community transformation.

In the Keerom context, transformative strategies therefore do not necessarily require the elimination of all customary values. Instead, a critical process is needed to distinguish cultural values that strengthen community cohesion and Indigenous identity from practices that produce women's subordination. Such an approach allows women's empowerment to remain contextually grounded: challenging patriarchy without eliminating Indigenous cultural identity.

6. Synthesis of Findings: Mechanisms of Patriarchal Reproduction

Based on the overall analysis, the reproduction of patriarchy can be understood as an interconnected process. Gender norms shape the division of social roles; these divisions may restrict women's access to education and resources; limited access to

resources may weaken women's bargaining positions; weakened bargaining power may reduce their involvement in decision-making; and limited participation in decision-making may subsequently reproduce and legitimize the same gender norms. Gender inequality therefore operates as a social cycle rather than as an isolated event.

This cycle demonstrates that addressing gender inequality requires interventions at multiple levels simultaneously. Transforming only one dimension—for example, increasing women's income—may not substantially alter gender relations if women continue to have limited authority over income, land, education, customary institutions, or household and community decisions. Consequently, empowerment needs to integrate economic, educational, sociocultural, legal, and political dimensions.

Table. 1 Summary of Findings on Patriarchy and Indigenous Women's Empowerment

Dimension	Manifestation Analyzed	Impact on Women	Theoretical Perspective	Direction of Empowerment
Domestic/Family	Gender-based division of labor	Domestic burden and weak bargaining position	Radical Feminism	Equitable family relations
Customary/Social	Dominance of customary authority	Limited voice and participation	Radical & Cultural Feminism	Inclusive customary institutions
Economic	Unequal access and control over resources	Economic dependency	Empowerment Theory	Economic access and resource control
Education	Limited education and information	Restricted capacity and mobility	Empowerment Theory	Education and gender literacy
Political	Limited influence in decision-making	Women's interests are underrepresented	Empowerment Theory	Substantive representation
Sociocultural	Normalization of gender roles	Intergenerational reproduction of patriarchy	Cultural Feminism	Reinterpretation of cultural values
Protection	Violence and discrimination	Physical, psychological, and economic vulnerability	Radical Feminism	Legal protection and advocacy

Overall, the findings suggest that the challenges facing Indigenous women in Keerom should not be understood merely as a consequence of women's limited individual capacities. More fundamentally, they are associated with power relations that may restrict women's access to resources, education, institutions, and decision-making. Empowerment strategies that focus exclusively on economic assistance may therefore generate only partial changes if they are not accompanied by transformations in social and institutional relations.

Radical feminism provides a framework for identifying and challenging structures of domination; cultural feminism offers an approach for recognizing women's values and the transformative potential embedded within local culture; while empowerment theory provides a practical framework for strengthening women's access, control, knowledge, participation, and collective capacity. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the empowerment of Indigenous women in Keerom should move from an assistance-oriented approach toward a rights-based and power-transformative approach.

Women should consequently be positioned not as passive recipients of development programs but as active subjects capable of defining their own needs, making choices, controlling resources, expressing ideas, influencing institutions, and participating meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives. Such an orientation provides the foundation for structural transformation toward an Indigenous society in Keerom that respects cultural diversity while promoting equality, women's rights, social justice, and gender equity.

7. Empowerment Strategy Model for Indigenous Women in Keerom

The synthesis of the research findings and theoretical perspectives demonstrates the need for a multidimensional empowerment model. The first strategy is to strengthen critical gender awareness through education and community dialogue. Radical feminism positions *consciousness-raising* as an important mechanism through which individual experiences of discrimination and violence can be understood as part of broader structural patterns. Such awareness can subsequently develop into solidarity and collective action among women.

The second strategy involves strengthening women's economic capacity and control over resources. Capital assistance and skills development programs should be accompanied by improved financial literacy, market access, strengthened women's economic organizations, and greater involvement of women in decisions concerning land and household resources. Findings from Pahari's study indicate that economic empowerment can be associated with increased women's mobility and greater participation in household decision-making.

The third strategy is the dialogical transformation of customary institutions. Customary leaders, Indigenous women, religious leaders, government representatives,

academics, and women's organizations should be brought together in participatory forums to critically evaluate social and customary practices that may have discriminatory implications for women. The objective is not to eliminate customary traditions, but rather to reinterpret cultural values so that respect for Indigenous culture can coexist with the recognition and protection of women's rights.

The fourth strategy focuses on strengthening women's education by promoting school retention and completion, expanding access to non-formal education, improving legal and political literacy, and developing practical and professional skills. Education should be positioned not only as a means of acquiring knowledge but also as an instrument for strengthening women's autonomy, critical awareness, and capacity to participate meaningfully in social, economic, and political life.

The fifth strategy is to strengthen women's substantive participation and representation by creating meaningful opportunities for women to participate in village deliberations, customary forums, development planning processes, social organizations, and governmental institutions. Women's participation should extend beyond numerical or symbolic representation and enable them to articulate their interests, influence agendas, and participate directly in decision-making processes.

The final strategy involves strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration. Women's empowerment cannot be placed solely on women themselves. Government institutions, customary institutions, churches or other religious institutions, educational institutions, women's organizations, civil society, families, and men should be actively involved in the empowerment process. This approach is consistent with a holistic model of empowerment that integrates personal, relational, and collective dimensions and moves beyond one-dimensional interventions. Through these interconnected strategies, the empowerment of Indigenous women in Keerom can contribute to sustainable structural transformation toward a more inclusive and gender-just Indigenous society.



Figure 3. Conceptual Model of Results and Gender Transformation Strategies

The model represents a synthesis of the research framework that integrates radical feminism, cultural feminism, and empowerment theory across six domains of analysis: domestic, sociocultural, economic, religious, educational, and political.

Overall, the discussion indicates that the challenges faced by Indigenous women in Keerom should not be understood merely as a consequence of women's limited individual capacities. A more fundamental issue lies in the structure of power relations that may restrict women's access to resources, education, institutions, and decision-making processes. Therefore, empowerment strategies that rely solely on economic assistance may result in only partial change if they are not accompanied by transformations in social relations. A radical feminist perspective is necessary to identify and dismantle structures of domination; cultural feminism is important to ensure that transformation continues to respect positive cultural values and local identities; while empowerment theory provides a practical framework for expanding women's access, control, participation, knowledge, and collective capacity.

Accordingly, the main findings of this study support the argument that the empowerment of Indigenous women in Keerom needs to shift from an assistance-based approach toward a rights-based and power-relations transformation approach. Women should be positioned not as objects or passive recipients of development programs, but as active subjects capable of defining their own needs, making choices, controlling resources, expressing ideas, influencing institutions, and participating meaningfully in decisions that determine their lives. This orientation is consistent with the objective of the study, which extends beyond identifying patriarchal structures to formulating transformative strategies toward a gender-just society in Keerom Regency.

Methodological Note: This section can be used as an academic draft of the Results and Discussion based on the available documentary data and literature. To establish it as a fully empirical account of field research, direct interview quotations, FGD findings, observation notes, the number and characteristics of informants, and questionnaire or survey data should be incorporated based exclusively on the actual data collected. No informant names, percentages, interview responses, or observational findings that are not contained in the available research materials have been created or assumed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that gender inequality within Indigenous communities in Keerom Regency constitutes a structural, multidimensional, and persistent issue associated with the operation of patriarchal ideology across various spheres of life. Patriarchy operates not only within domestic and family relations but is also reproduced through sociocultural and customary structures,

economic systems, religion, education, as well as politics and decision-making processes. These conditions may reinforce gender-based divisions of roles that restrict women's access, control, participation, and bargaining power over resources and strategic spaces within community life. Therefore, gender inequality should not be understood merely as an individual problem experienced by women, but rather as part of broader power relations constructed and maintained through social and cultural structures.

In the economic and educational dimensions, the empowerment of Indigenous women should not be limited to income generation or economic assistance. Empowerment needs to encompass greater access to and control over economic resources, education, information, skills, and knowledge of women's rights. Education occupies a strategic position because it can strengthen women's capacity to obtain employment, improve their bargaining position, understand their rights, and participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. Therefore, improvements in formal education should be integrated with gender, legal, political, and economic literacy, as well as broader capacity-building initiatives.

This study further emphasizes that Indigenous women should be positioned as subjects and agents of social transformation, rather than merely as vulnerable groups or beneficiaries of development programs. Women's empowerment should promote a transition from symbolic participation toward substantive participation, in which women are able to articulate their aspirations, define their needs, propose agendas, control resources, influence institutions, and participate meaningfully in decision-making. Experiences of Indigenous women's organizations in Papua also demonstrate that women's identity and solidarity can serve as a collective force for advocating their rights while simultaneously preserving cultural values and Indigenous community resources.

Accordingly, strategies for empowering Indigenous women in Keerom need to adopt a multidimensional, contextual, participatory, and transformative approach that integrates radical feminism, cultural feminism, and empowerment theory. These strategies include strengthening critical gender awareness, expanding women's educational opportunities, enhancing economic independence and control over resources, promoting the dialogical transformation of customary institutions, strengthening women's participation and representation, protecting women's rights, and fostering collaboration among government institutions, customary institutions, religious organizations, educational institutions, women's organizations, civil society, families, and men.

Ultimately, the transformation envisioned in this study is not intended to eliminate the cultural identity and values of Indigenous communities, but rather to critically reinterpret social and cultural practices that may perpetuate women's subordination. The empowerment of Indigenous women should therefore shift from an

assistance-based approach toward a rights-based approach centered on the transformation of power relations. Such an orientation is expected to contribute to the development of an inclusive, dignified, and gender-just Indigenous society in Keerom Regency.

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