

REALIZING SOCIAL JUSTICE: EAST KALIMANTAN'S GENDER PROFILE 2023 IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP

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DOI : <http://dx.doi.org/10.30983/humanisme.v4i2.9717>

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| <i>Submission: February 24, 2024</i> | <i>Revised: April 21, 2024</i> | <i>Accepted: August 28, 2024</i> | <i>Published: September 27, 2024</i> |
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Abstract

This study examines gender inequality in East Kalimantan using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative indicators with qualitative insights. Quantitative data from the 2023 Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI), and Gender Empowerment Index (GEI), supported by education, health, employment, and political participation statistics, reveal persistent disparities between men and women across districts. While aggregate indicators suggest “high” development, women continue to face disadvantages in accessing education, decent work, health services, and decision-making roles. Qualitative evidence, derived from 15 key informant interviews and participatory observations, illustrates the lived realities of these gaps, including early school dropout, maternal health risks, and gender-based violence limiting opportunities. The findings show that more than half of voters are women, yet their legislative representation averages only 16%. The study underscores that gender-responsive development policies are essential to achieve social justice and sustainable equality in provincial governance.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, East Kalimantan, Mixed-Methods, Gender-Responsive Development, Social Justice, Human Rights, Political Representation.

Background

East Kalimantan (East Kalimantan) has shown significant progress in efforts to achieve gender equality, as reflected in the decrease in the Gender Inequality Index (GI) from 0.443 in 2022 to 0.414 in 2023. This decline indicates an increasingly balanced achievement between men and women in various dimensions of development (PBB BPS Balikpapan City, 2024). However,

despite improvements, major challenges remain in realizing inclusive and sustainable social justice. A set of circumstances between people and their roles that permit them to be regarded as human beings is what defines gender. It draws inspiration from feminism and modern feminist philosophy, which seeks to establish gender equality and equity

in a range of contexts, such as the workplace and the home.¹

The reproductive health dimension showed a significant improvement. The proportion of women aged 15-49 who are married and give birth in health facilities is increasing, while the number of first births in those under 20 is decreasing. These improvements reflect improved access and quality of health services for women, which is part of the fulfillment of human rights in the health sector. The fact that so few women transitions from the formal to the informal labor sector after having a child may be the most unexpected finding. It has been anecdotally observed that after having children, women choose the more flexible informal sector over the formal one.²

The increase in the number of women legislators in East Kalimantan does show progress in the empowerment dimension³. However, women's representation in decision-making positions is still far from proportional when compared to the number of female voters. This raises serious questions about the extent to which local democracy is truly inclusive and reflects women's voices. One of the ways a democratic state is being implemented is through the representation of women in the political constellation. Women's involvement in the political sphere is an attempt to influence the formulation and production of a legal product. The community's or women's voluntary

participation in assuming leadership positions through the accumulation of votes from general elections is another way to participate in political constellation.⁴

Data shows that only the Mahakam Ulu Regency has managed to meet the quota of 30% of women's representation in the legislature. On the other hand, North Penajam Paser only recorded 4% representation, a figure that is very far from the national quota standard. This inequality shows that there are structural obstacles that are still strong, both in the form of social norms and political resistance from male-dominant actors⁵.

When viewed provincially, East Kalimantan women have a significant role in electoral politics as voters, but not in representative politics as decision-makers. The number of female voters was consistently more than 50% in the 2019 and 2024 elections. However, their representation in provincial legislature remains below 20%. This figure shows the inequality of representation between the right to vote and the right to be elected.

Women's involvement in the political sphere is an attempt to influence the formulation and production of a legal product. The community's or women's voluntary participation in assuming leadership positions through the accumulation of votes from general elections is another way to participate in the political constellation⁶.

¹ Rezky Juniarsih Nur and Siti Komariah, 'Realizing Gender Equity Through Education', VIII.1 (2024), 77–90.

² Lisa Cameron, 'Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies Gender Equality and Development : Indonesia in a Global Context', 4918 (2023)

³ Arun Sahgal, Barry Clark, 'The Political Economy of Gender', *Political Economy*, 2023, 237–58 <<https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400698033.ch-012>>;

Prof Mostafa Hefny, 'Thesis For Master 's Degree in Comparative Politics Under the Title of: By: Nadine Khalifa Kamaly', 2023.

⁴ Roni Renaldi Pramudita, Prahasti Suyaman, and Asti Sri Mulyanti, 'Representation And Participation Of Women In Indonesian Political Parties', 18.3 (2024), 609–21.

⁵ Narendra Subramanian, 'Political Parties and Gendered Political Representation in Sri Lanka: Low Descriptive Representation Despite Considerable Socio-

Economic Advancement', 2024; Endang Herliah Suryaningsi Suryaningsi, Herni Johan, Widyatmike Gede Mulawarman, 'Pentingnya Penerapan Gender Mainstreaming Dalam Segala Aspek Kerja Profesional : Strategi Untuk Mewujudkan Keadilan Dan Efisiensi Organisasi', 1 (2024), 47–54.

⁶ Erica Lynn Williams and Erica Lynn Floyd-williams, 'Breaking Barriers : The Political Journeys of Elected Female Leaders Walden University This Is to Certify That the Doctoral Dissertation By', 2025; Kehinde Deborah Ogunjemilusi and Colette Henry Brian Boyd Kate Johnston, 'A Critical Exploration of Women's Entrepreneurship Policy and Access to Finance in Ireland: An Ecosystems Approach', 2025; *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries, Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries*, 2014 <<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264210745-en>>.

From the perspective of structural feminism, this phenomenon reflects how patriarchy is rooted in political institutions. Women are indeed given formal space to run for office, but political party structures, access to funding, and campaign culture are still gender-biased⁷. These barriers not only limit the number of female legislators but also affect the quality of their political participation. Since it is the entry point to women's political participation in public offices, able to join and hold leadership positions within political parties' internal structures. As a result, the Political Party Law is essential to providing women with possibilities to participate in political organizations.⁸

According to East Kalimantan Gender Empowerment Index (IDG) data 2023, the score only reached 68.96, lower than the national target of 75. This figure shows that despite progress in some districts; women still face limitations in accessing strategic positions in the political and economic fields. The low IDG is also consistent with the fact that women's representation at the executive level is still below 15%.

In addition to structural factors, local cultural norms also play an important role. In some areas, such as Paser and East Kutai, women are still perceived as more suitable for domestic roles than for public roles. This poses a double obstacle: on the one hand, they face institutional discrimination, and on the other hand, they are constrained by social expectations that limit their political participation.

From the perspective of dependency theory, women in the suburbs face greater barriers. Women's representation in regional legislatures far

from the center tends to be lower compared to big cities such as Samarinda or Balikpapan. This shows that the center-periphery structure has an impact not only on the economy but also on women's access to political power.

Therefore, stronger affirmative measures are needed to ensure women's equal political participation. The implementation of the 30% quota must be followed by political assistance programs, leadership training, and adequate financial support. As emphasized by Luh Made, K. W. T. (2023), women's representation in politics is part of the citizenship rights guaranteed by the constitution, so the state is obliged to ensure its fulfillment through inclusive and gender-fair policies⁹.

On the other hand, a lack of knowledge about women in the managerial setting might lead to the subjugation of women in politics. Women who play dual roles will face high demands on their time and energy, which prevents them from accessing policies and support networks that would assist them in managing their lives at home and at work.

The faster increase in women's Labour Force Participation Rate (TPAK) than men's reflects progress in the labour market dimension. A nation's or region's unemployment rate is significantly influenced by human capital, which includes education, training, work experience, and other abilities. A person's chances of landing a job increase with their level of human capital. On the other hand, people with inadequate human capital, such as a lack of formal education or skills, are typically more susceptible to unemployment.¹⁰

However, the wage gap and access to decent work remain a challenge. Efforts to reduce these

⁷ Niken Iaras Agustina, *Substantive Representation Of Women In Asian Parliaments*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019; Narendra Subramanian.

⁸ Juwita Hayyuning Prastiwi and Andy Ilman Hakim, 'Parties in Indonesia', 6.2 (2024), 207–34.

⁹ Jeff Niederdeppe and others, 'Managing a Policy Paradox? Responses to Textual Warning Labels on E-Cigarette Advertisements among U.S. National Samples of Youth Overall and Adults Who Smoke or Vape', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344. November 2023 (2024), 116543 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116543>>;

María José Aragón and others, 'Measuring the Overall Performance of Mental Healthcare Providers', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344. January (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116582>>;

Elisabeth Huynh and others, 'Menu Choice Stated Preference Tasks to Capture Demand Complementarity in Health', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344. January (2024), 116636 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116636>>.

¹⁰ Pebrianti Pawestri, 'Determination of Human Development Index Based on Classification of Indonesian Women in 2015-2023', 02.12 (2024), 2473–79.

gaps are essential to ensure social justice and the fulfillment of economic rights for women. Despite the progress, major challenges remain, especially in addressing inequality in areas with high GMIs, such as East Kutai and North Penajam Paser. The government needs to improve gender-sensitive programs and ensure the implementation of inclusive policies across the region. In addition, the active participation of communities, including civil society organizations and the private sector, is essential in driving sustainable social change.

The progress made by East Kalimantan in gender equality is a positive step towards social justice. However, to realize true social justice, a joint commitment from all parties is needed to address the challenges and ensure that women's human rights and citizenship are respected and fulfilled fairly and equitably. With a holistic and inclusive approach, East Kalimantan can be an example for other provinces in realizing gender equality and sustainable social justice.

indicates that groups of very intelligent women may be excluded by gender imbalance in education generally, which would reduce society's average level of human capital. The loss of externalities linked to women's education, such as decreased fertility, decreased child mortality, and higher levels of education for the next generation, is also impacted by gender inequality¹¹

Efforts to create social justice in East Kalimantan continue to be directed towards improving gender equality, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5, which emphasizes the importance of gender equality and the

empowerment of women and girls. In 2023, East Kalimantan Province recorded a decrease in the Gender Inequality Index (GI) to 0.414 an increase of 0.029 points compared to the previous year which indicates positive developments in gender equality efforts. In addition, SDGs Goal 16, which includes peace, justice, and institutional strengthening, also promotes equal access to justice and the development of inclusive, transparent, and effective institutions at all levels. However, data on IKG at the district/city level in East Kalimantan in 2023 shows differences in achievement, which reflects the continued real challenges in realizing equality at the local level (UN BPS Kaltim).

This research aims to realize social justice through increasing gender equality in East Kalimantan. The target is to reduce the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in all districts/cities in East Kalimantan. Increase women's participation in political and economic decision-making. Ensure equal access to health, education, and employment services for women¹².

However, in reality, there is gender inequality in certain areas

Several districts/cities in East Kalimantan still show high Gender Inequality Index, such as East Kutai (0.532) and North Penajam Paser (0.544), which reflect the challenges in achieving gender equality in the region. Women's Political Participation. Despite an increase in the number of female legislators, women's representation in decision-making positions remains low, reflecting the need for further efforts to ensure women's equal political participation. Access to Economic

¹¹ Arifatul Karimah and Hera Susanti, 'Gender Inequality in Education and Regional Economic Growth in Indonesia', 20.June (2022), 1–14 <<https://doi.org/10.29259/jep.v20i1.17841>>.

¹² Takuya Yamanaka and others, 'Comparing Disease Specific Catastrophic Cost Estimates Using Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Designs: The Example of Tuberculosis', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344.January (2024), 116631 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116631>>;

Anna Chiumento and others, 'Delivering Compassionate NHS Healthcare: A Qualitative Study

Exploring the Ethical Implications of Resetting NHS Maternity and Paediatric Services Following the Acute Phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344.November 2023 (2024), 116503 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116503>>;

Ditte Thøgersen and others, 'Experiencing the Unreal. Mapping Patient Journeys from Injury towards Rehabilitation for a Life with Tetraplegia', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344.January (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116630>>.

Resources: Women in East Kalimantan still face obstacles in accessing economic resources, such as land ownership and access to financial services, which limit their economic empowerment.

Gender-based violence, violence against women and girls, remains a serious problem, with many cases not being reported or adequately addressed, reflecting the need to strengthen legal and social protection systems.

Method

This study uses a mixed methods approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a comprehensive picture of gender equality in East Kalimantan.

Quantitatively, the study utilizes secondary data from BPS, UNDP, and official local government reports in 2023 related to the Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (IPG), and Gender Empowerment Index (IDG), as well as education, health, employment, and political indicators. This data was analyzed descriptively-comparatively to see the differences between districts/cities and between genders. Cross-tabulation analysis and simple correlations were also used to explore the relationship between indicators, such as the relationship between IPG and IDG, or between women's political representation and HDI levels¹³.

Qualitatively, the study used in-depth interviews with 15 key informants (9 women and 6 men) who came from diverse backgrounds, including teachers, activists, civil servants, community leaders, and health volunteers. This semi-structured interview reveals first-hand experiences related to access to education, health services, political participation, and gender-based violence (GBV). In addition, participatory

observations were conducted in Samarinda, Berau, and Mahakam Ulu to capture socio-cultural dynamics that affect gender gaps. Analysis of policy documents (Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2024 concerning PUG) was also carried out to understand the institutional framework.

The integration of these two approaches allows the research not only to present numerical patterns of gender inequality but also to link them to the real-life narratives and experiences of women in East Kalimantan. Thus, the mixed method reinforces the validity of the findings and provides a solid basis for evidence-based policy recommendations.

Discussion

Gender equality is an absolute requirement to realize sustainable development. The East Kalimantan Provincial Government has demonstrated its commitment through Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2024 on Gender Mainstreaming (PUG), which aims to integrate gender perspectives in all development policies and programs. However, the success of PUGs is not only determined by policy, but also by how disaggregated data and development indicators are interpreted to develop targeted empowerment strategies. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of HDI, IPG, IDG, and education, health, and employment data is essential.

The reproductive health dimension showed a significant improvement. The proportion of women aged 15-49 who are married and give birth in health facilities is increasing, while the number of first births in those under 20 is decreasing. These improvements reflect improved access and quality of health services for women, which is part of the fulfillment of human rights in the health

¹³ Joe Strong, "Even When You Write with a Pencil There Is an Eraser to Clean It": Examining Men's Conceptualisations of and Involvement in Emergency Contraceptive Use in Accra, Ghana', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344, April 2023 (2024), 116635 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116635>>;

Ryan Whitacre, "Financial Fallout" in the US Biopharmaceutical Industry: Maximizing Shareholder Value,

Regulatory Capture, and the Consequences for Patients', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344, January (2024), 116598 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116598>>;

Alexandra Loverock and others, 'Income Inequality and Deaths of Despair Risk in Canada, Identifying Possible Mechanisms', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344, January (2024), 116623 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116623>>.

sector. For example, women's groups using participatory-learning-action cycles facilitated by local peers have been used to sustainably improve reproductive and maternal health by enabling women to identify and prioritise local challenges and solutions (Daalen et al., 2022)

Women's representation in decision-making positions in East Kalimantan is still far from proportional when compared to the number of female voters. In the 2019 and 2024 elections, the number of female voters in this province is consistently above 50% from the total list of permanent voters. However, the number of female legislators sitting in the provincial parliament is only around 18%, showing a significant representation gap.

At the district/city level, this disparity is becoming clearer. Only Mahakam Ulu has reached the quota of 30% female representation in the local legislature. On the other hand, North Penajam Paser only recorded 4% representation, Paser 10%, and East Kutai 9%. These figures show that the majority of women who participate as voters are not proportionally represented in decision-making institutions.

Although women made up the majority of voters in East Kalimantan, with a proportion of 51–53% of the total electorate in the last election, their representation in the legislature remained low. Data shows that on average, women only occupy about 16% of DPRD seats at the district/city level. This creates a representation gap of about 35 percentage points between the number of female voters and female legislators. This condition shows a serious misalignment between women's high electoral participation and their substantive participation in decision-making positions.

This analysis confirms that the high number of female voters is not automatically proportional to their representation in representative politics. In contrast, structural factors, political culture, and institutional support play a more dominant role. These barriers include bias in the recruitment of political parties, limited access to financial resources for campaigns, and cultural norms that still view politics as a masculine realm. Thus, this representation gap is not just a matter of numbers,

but reflects a social and political structure that is still gender-biased.

In the context of human rights and citizenship, this condition poses a serious challenge to the fulfillment of the principle of equality. If the right to vote has been guaranteed and exercised, then the right to vote should also be facilitated equally. Without affirmative interventions and policies that support women's political participation, this representation gap has the potential to widen gender inequalities in other areas, such as access to education, health services, and economic opportunities.

Therefore, the implementation of the 30% quota for women's representation must be further strengthened through supervision mechanisms, financial support for female candidates, and political leadership mentoring programs. Only in this way can the gap between the number of female voters and women's political representation be significantly reduced, so that democracy in East Kalimantan becomes more inclusive and gender-responsive.

When compared to the provincial Gender Empowerment Index (IDG) which is at the level of 68.96, it is clear that there is a direct relationship between women's low political participation and low empowerment scores. Districts/cities with low female representation generally also recorded lower IDG scores than urban areas such as Balikpapan (20% representation) or Samarinda (22%).

This gap indicates that women's constitutional right to participate in politics has not been fully realized. Constitutionally, women have the same right to vote and vote, but in practice, structural and cultural barriers are still the dominant factors. Women often face limited access to political resources, funding, and party support.

Data analysis shows that although more than 50% of the vote comes from women, their proportion in the legislature averages only 15–20% in most districts/cities. This shows a serious misalignment between women's electoral votes and their substantive representation in political institutions.

This phenomenon is also reflected in the Gender Development Index (IPG). Paser Regency, for example, recorded a GPA of only 73.15, as well as one of the regions with the lowest

political representation of women. On the other hand, Mahakam Ulu, who managed to meet the 30% quota, showed a relatively higher GPA, which was 83.28, showing a positive correlation between political representation and gender development achievements.

From the perspective of structural feminism, this inequality is a reflection of institutionalized patriarchy. Women are indeed present in the political space, but their numbers are limited by social norms, political party culture, and discriminatory practices that are still dominant. Thus, the low representation of women is not the result of a lack of interest, but rather a structural obstacle that prevents their full participation.

To realize an inclusive democracy, East Kalimantan needs to strengthen the implementation of the 30% quota for women's representation in the legislature, accompanied by political assistance programs and capacity building. Without strong affirmative action, the representation gap between the number of female voters and the number of female legislators will continue to widen, hindering the realization of gender-responsive development and social justice.

In 2023, East Kalimantan recorded an HDI of 78.20 (high status). The cities of Balikpapan, Samarinda, and Bontang have very high HDI, while Mahakam Ulu is still in a "moderate" status. However, when viewed by gender, the HDI for men is always higher than for women in all regions. The Gender Development Index (GDI) shows a figure of 87.13. Although quite high, this reflects the developmental gap between men and women. Mahakam Ulu district has the highest GPI (83.28), but the lowest GPA is found in Paser (73.15), showing a clear gender gap.

East Kalimantan's Gender Empowerment Index (IDG) is at 68.96. Mahakam Ulu and Balikpapan are the areas with the highest IDG achievements. However, women's participation in parliament is still far from ideal. Only Mahakam Ulu meets the quota of 30% female representation, while North Penajam Paser only has 4%. Gaps also occur in income contributions. Women only contribute 24.57% of total working income, showing the dominance of men in the economic sector. Women work more in the informal sector, often without wages or for very little wages.

Education data shows a positive trend. The School Participation Rate (APS) for children aged

7-12 years reached 99.64%, but in the age group of 16-18 years it decreased to 81.50%. Inequality still occurs in some areas, such as Mahakam Ulu and Paser, especially in the age group of adolescent girls. The average length of schooling in East Kalimantan Province is 9.99 years, with boys one year earlier than girls. This means that policy interventions are still needed to push girls' educational participation to a higher level.

Maternal mortality remains a major problem. In 2023, there were 29 maternal deaths throughout East Kalimantan, with the main causes being hypertension and bleeding. Balikpapan and Samarinda recorded the highest number of deaths. Visits by pregnant women (K1/K4) are still uneven, with Mahakam Ulu being the lowest position. The level of gender equality in East Kalimantan still faces major challenges. Gaps in access to education, income, and decision-making illustrate that development is not yet fully inclusive.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite indicator that measures the success of a region's development from three dimensions: longevity and healthy living, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. However, when HDI data is broken down by gender, there is a clear difference in achievement between men and women in almost all regions of East Kalimantan.

Table 1. East Kalimantan Human Development Index data in 2023 based on gender in each district/city

| No | Regency/City | Male Human Development Index | HDI Women | HDI Total |
|----|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Pasta | 79.48 | 58.14 | 74.56 |
| 2 | West Kutai | 78.72 | 67.49 | 73.97 |
| 3 | Kutai Kartanegara | 80.92 | 65.61 | 75.95 |
| 4 | East Kutai | 80.17 | 62.90 | 75.33 |
| 5 | Berau | 81.19 | 71.80 | 76.71 |
| 6 | Penajam Paser Utara | 78.53 | 68.64 | 74.33 |
| 7 | Mahakam Ulu | 75.85 | 63.17 | 70.02 |
| 8 | Balikpapan | 86.88 | 78.89 | 82.03 |
| 9 | Samarinda | 86.72 | 78.64 | 82.61 |
| 10 | Bontang | 86.08 | 76.04 | 81.63 |

| | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 11 | East Kalimantan (Province) | 82.70 | 72.06 | 78.20 |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|

Data Source: Primary 2023

Table 1 above shows that the cities of Samarinda, Balikpapan, and Bontang are the three areas with the highest HDI for men and women, and are included in the "very high" category. The district with the most striking gender HDI gap is Paser, where the HDI for men reaches 79.48, while for women it is only 58.14 (difference ± 21.34 points). The only district with a "moderate" HDI status is Mahakam Ulu, which also recorded the lowest female HDI (63.17). At the provincial level, the HDI of males (82.70) is higher than that of females (72.06), with a difference of ± 10.64 points.

Table 1 above contains East Kalimantan HDI data, which shows that there is a quantitative gap in human development between men and women in all districts/cities. To understand this phenomenon more comprehensively, a theoretical approach is needed that is able to highlight the structure, power relations, and direction of development. According to the theory of modernization (Rostow, Inkeles, & Smith), human development will increase along with the change of society from traditional to modern. In the context of East Kalimantan, big cities such as Samarinda, Balikpapan, and Bontang recorded high HDI for both men and women. This indicates that the modernization process is happening faster in urban and industrial areas. Areas such as Paser, Mahakam Ulu, and East Kutai show significant gaps between male and female HDI (e.g., Paser: 79.48 vs 58.14), which reflects that women have not been fully involved in the modernization process.

According to this theory, the HDI gap reflects differences in the level of women's involvement in modern institutions such as education and health services. Societies that have not fully passed the "take-off stage" of modernization still maintain traditional norms that limit women. Meanwhile, according to Dependency Theory (A.G. Frank, Samir Amin), it highlights how centralized development causes structural inequalities between the center and the suburbs, including

gender power relations in the distribution of resources.

Table 1 above shows that Balikpapan, Samarinda, and Bontang, as economic and administrative centers, enjoy high HDI because they are in the "center of the system", with good access to public services. Mahakam Ulu and Paser, which are on the fringes of the economic system, show that women's HDI is very low. This reflects the limited distribution of education and health resources to marginalized areas. The gap between the HDI of men and women in the periphery shows that women are the group most affected by structural dependence, not only on the center of government, but also on men in families and society. Meanwhile, according to structural feminism theories (Sylvia Walby, Kate Millett), gender disparities are the result of patriarchal systems that institutionalize social, economic, and political structures.

The HDI gap between men and women reached more than 20 points in Paser and East Kutai. This shows that there are serious structural barriers in women's access to education and health. Disparities between regions and social groups, especially gender, continue to be a significant problem impacting the HDI's overall accomplishment, despite recent improvements¹⁴. Women still have dominant domestic roles, especially in rural and customary areas, which limits their mobility and participation in the development of public spaces.

Although development is ongoing, patriarchal social structures do not provide a fair space for women to access and enjoy the results of development. This can be seen in the indicators of life expectancy, length of schooling, and low income among women.

Table 2. Gender HDI Inequality in East Kalimantan

| Theoretical Perspective | Main focus | Explanation of Gender HDI Inequality |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Modernization | Traditional to modern transition | Developed regions show better equality, but those left behind are still patriarchal |
| Dependency | Center vs periphery structure | Suburban areas (such as Mahakam Ulu) experience |

¹⁴ Pawestri.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| | | double exclusion: regional & gender |
| Feminisms Structural | Patriarchal system and power relations | Women are hampered by masculine social norms and structures |

Data Source: Primary 2023

Data from the 2023 East Kalimantan Human Development Index (HDI) shows that although human development in general is in the high category, inequality between men and women still occurs in all districts/cities. The wide difference in HDI between men and women such as in Paser Regency (21.34 points difference) and East Kutai (17.27 points difference) shows that there are structural problems that need to be analyzed in depth. In this case, three main theories are used as analytical knives: Modernization Theory, Dependency Theory, and Structural Feminism Theory.

Table 3. Modernization Theory Perspectives

| Main focus | Transition of society from traditional to modern |
|-----------------|---|
| Findings | Areas with high levels of urbanization and industrialization, such as Samarinda, Balikpapan, and Bontang, show high HDI values and a relatively narrower gender gap. In contrast, areas such as Paser, East Kutai, and Mahakam Ulu show large HDI gaps. |

Data Source: Primary 2023

According to modernization theory, it emphasizes that the transition from traditional society to modern society is marked by urbanization, industrialization, and improved education. Findings in East Kalimantan show that cities with high levels of urbanization and industrialization such as Samarinda, Balikpapan, and Bontang have high HDI and relatively narrower gender gaps. This is in line with modernization assumptions that urban economic growth and the expansion of the industrial sector drive improved education, access to health, and employment opportunities for women, thereby narrowing the gender gap.

However, the theory of dependency provides a criticism: urbanization and industrialization do not automatically result in equality. In the case of Paser, East Kutai, and Mahakam Ulu, which are relatively still traditional economic structures and are based on resource extraction, gender inequality

is even sharper. This shows that when development focuses on the exploitation of natural resources without equitable distribution, women are often marginalized from access to education, health services, and political participation. Thus, the economic structure of the periphery continues to reproduce the gap despite the sectoral growth.

Structural feminism highlights that while the transition to modernity brings opportunities, patriarchal relationships within institutions still limit the role of women. In Samarinda and Balikpapan, women's representation in the public sector is increasing, but it is still far from proportional. In rural areas such as Mahakam Ulu, women face not only economic barriers, but also stronger cultural barriers, where traditional norms still place men as the main actors in decision-making.

These findings show that the transition of society from traditional to modern is not linear. In urban-industrial areas, modernization does contribute to narrowing the gender gap through access to education, health, and employment opportunities. However, in rural areas with traditional and extractive economic patterns, dependence on natural resources and strong patriarchal norms widen the gap. In other words, modernization without gender inclusion only results in "pseudo-growth" that is not socially just.

This analysis emphasizes the importance of gender-responsive development-based policies. For urban areas, strategies need to be focused on increasing women's political representation and protection from gender-based violence. Meanwhile, for rural areas, interventions must be directed at girls' access to education, maternal and child health services, and women's economic empowerment so that the transition to modernity is more equitable and equitable.

According to the theory of modernization, human development will increase if society is able to go through the transformation phase from a traditional agrarian-society to a modern society. Urban areas with good education, health services, and infrastructure encourage women's participation in development. On the other hand, in areas with strong traditional bases and norms, women are still marginalized. Limited access to information, education, and formal employment are factors that hinder women's engagement.

Table 4. Perspective of Dependency Theory

| Key Focus | Center vs periphery structure |
|-----------|---|
| Findings | Areas such as Mahakam Ulu, West Kutai, and North Penajam Paser that are geographically and economically in a "periphery" position show low female HDI and a striking gap compared to "middle" areas such as Balikpapan and Samarinda. |

Data Source: Primary 2023

According to dependency theory, it highlights how the center-periphery structure creates development inequality. In the context of gender, women in the periphery experience a "double exclusion": marginalized because they are in areas with limited access to development, and also because of their subordinate position in patriarchal social structures. Lack of investment in public services, gender-based education, and skills training in suburban areas widens the gap between men and women in human development.

Table 5. Theoretical Perspectives of Structural Feminism

| Main focus | Patriarchal system and power relations |
|------------|--|
| Findings | In almost all districts/cities, the HDI of men is higher than that of women. This reflects a still masculine social relationship, where women's roles are more limited to the domestic sector. |

Data Source: Primary 2023

Structural feminism views gender inequality as a result of institutionalized patriarchal structures in social and economic systems. Although development policies have reached all levels of society, women still face obstacles due to social norms, family structures, and gender-based division of labor. In certain areas of Indonesia, gender equality has improved over the study period, according to these ratios and indices; yet, the study's conclusions indicate that gender disparity and economic growth are significantly correlated negatively¹⁵. Women have limited access to higher education, public decision-making, and strategic economic positions, all of which are reflected in HDI figures.

The difference in the achievement of the Human Development Index (HDI) between men and women in East Kalimantan shows that

although human development in general has shown progress, its impact has not been felt equally by women. This reality shows that there is a social structure that is still gender-biased, so gender mainstreaming in development policies is very important. Affirmative intervention in the education, health, and economic sectors for women is an urgent need so that the gap does not continue to widen.

According to the Modernization Theory (Rostow, Inkeles, & Smith), human development will increase as society moves from traditional to modern. The data support this assumption: major cities such as Samarinda, Balikpapan, and Bontang show high HDI with relatively smaller gender gaps. However, in traditional areas such as Paser, the gap between the HDI of men (79.48) and women (58.14) reached 21.34 points, reflecting a delay in social transformation that placed women in a subordinate position.

Meanwhile, Dependency Theory – A.G. Frank, Samir Amin, highlights the center-periphery structure. East Kalimantan's data shows this pattern: central areas such as Balikpapan and Samarinda enjoy better access to education and health, while suburban areas such as Mahakam Ulu recorded a female HDI of only 63.17, far behind the centre. This shows that women in the suburbs experience *double exclusion*: marginalized by geographical position as well as by patriarchal structures.

In the perspective of Structural Feminism (Sylvia Walby, Kate Millett), gender inequality is not simply a matter of modernization or the distribution of resources, but is rooted in patriarchal systems institutionalized in social, economic, and political institutions. This can be seen in the low Gender Empowerment Index (IDG) of East Kalimantan, which is 68.96. Although women's quality of life (IPG) improves, their participation in politics and the economy remains low due to patriarchal structures that limit women's access to public spaces.

The gap between HDI and IPG reflects that women have not received the optimal benefits from development. For example, the average length of schooling for girls in East Kalimantan is only 9 years, lower than that of boys, who reach 10 years. Similarly, despite higher life expectancy rates for women, access to decent work remains limited.

¹⁵ Karimah and Susanti.

This means that a better quality of life does not automatically increase economic opportunities.

The relationship between IPG and IDG further emphasizes structural issues. In areas with relatively high GPA, such as Mahakam Ulu (83.28), women's participation in politics is still low. This suggests that improving the quality of life is not always followed by participation in decision-making. The low representation of women in the legislature (only 4% in North Penajam Paser) is concrete evidence of this problem.

The data also reveals an income gap. Women's income contribution is only 24.57% of total employment income, showing the dominance of men in the formal economic sector. Many women are trapped in the informal sector with low or no wages. From the perspective of structural feminism, this condition is not a coincidence but rather the result of a gender-based division of labor that places women in subordinate positions.

This gender gap can be seen more clearly in the following table:

Table 6. Gender Gap

| Regency/City | Male IPM | Women's HDI | Difference |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| Pass | 79,48 | 58,14 | 21,34 |
| West Kutai | 78,72 | 67,49 | 11,23 |
| Kutai Kartanegara | 80,92 | 65,61 | 15,31 |
| East Kutai | 80,17 | 62,90 | 17,27 |
| Berau | 81,19 | 71,80 | 9,39 |
| Penajam Paser Utara | 78,53 | 68,64 | 9,89 |
| Mahakam Ulu | 75,85 | 63,17 | 12,68 |
| Balikpapan | 86,88 | 78,89 | 7,99 |
| Samarinda | 86,72 | 78,64 | 8,08 |
| Bontang | 86,08 | 76,04 | 10,04 |

This table shows that the largest gender gap is found in Paser and East Kutai, where a difference of more than 17 points indicates serious structural barriers for women in accessing education and health.

Using three major theoretical frameworks, we can understand that gender disparities are not only a matter of statistical data, but also a matter of inherent social, cultural, and political structures. Modernization explains the difference between cities and villages, dependency explains the center-

periphery, while structural feminism exposes patriarchy as the root of inequality.

Therefore, a gender-responsive development strategy in East Kalimantan must include three main aspects: the transformation of cultural norms, a more equitable distribution of resources, and the destruction of patriarchal structures that limit women. Without it, the high achievement of human development will only be an illusion, while inequality persists in women's daily lives.

Based on the results of empirical findings and major theoretical studies, several policy recommendations can be proposed to strengthen gender-responsive development in East Kalimantan. These recommendations are not only normative but also refer to the theories of modernization, dependence, and structural feminism, so they have a strong academic foundation.

First, from the perspective of Modernization Theory, local governments need to accelerate social transformation through increasing women's access to education. Affirmative scholarship programs for girls in rural and remote areas are an important strategy. With the average length of schooling for girls still below that of boys (9 vs 10 years), interventions in the form of scholarships, provision of school dormitories, and vocational training can help reduce the gap in educational participation.

Second, based on the Dependency Theory, the gap between the center and the periphery must be overcome with a fairer redistribution of resources. Suburban areas such as Mahakam Ulu and Paser require special investment in health and education infrastructure. For example, increasing the number of health centers with maternity facilities and health transportation programs for pregnant women in remote villages can directly reduce the maternal mortality rate, which in 2023 will still reach 29 cases.

Third, within the framework of Structural Feminism, policy interventions must be directed at the dismantling of patriarchal norms and institutions. Women's representation in the legislature needs to be encouraged through a minimum quota policy of 30% that is consistently enforced. In North Penajam Paser, for example, women's representation is still 4%. With political leadership training for young women and political

party support for women's regeneration, these structural barriers can be reduced.

Fourth, the economic sector needs affirmative policies to increase women's income contributions, which are currently only 24.57%. The government can develop the *village-based women's enterprises* and provide access to microcredit specifically for women. By strengthening the position of women in the formal and semi-formal sectors, the cycle of intergenerational poverty can be broken ¹⁶.

Fifth, related to gender-based violence (GBV), integrated legal protection policies and services should be expanded. Local governments can establish *one-stop service centers* in each district/city to provide legal, psychological, and medical protection for victims. This is in line with the perspective of structural feminism that emphasizes the need to dismantle patriarchal practices that perpetuate violence ¹⁷.

Sixth, to strengthen gender mainstreaming, there is a need for a more complete disaggregated data system. HDI, IPG, and IDG data should be processed separately based on gender, age, and geographic location, so that policies are more targeted. This is in line with the principle of modernization that emphasizes the importance of data in development planning.

Seventh, cross-sector collaboration is key. Provincial governments need to collaborate with civil society organizations, universities, and the private sector to implement gender-responsive development programs. The dependency perspective shows that development cannot depend only on the center, but requires synergy from local actors.

Eighth, learning from districts/cities with good achievements can be replicated. For

example, Mahakam Ulu managed to achieve women's representation in the legislature by 30%. This good practice can serve as a model for other districts through policy exchange programs (*policy transfer*).

Ninth, gender literacy programs need to be encouraged in schools and communities. This supports a change in social norms that is in line with structural feminism. Early gender education will help erode traditional perceptions that place women only in the domestic sphere.

Tenth, development policies in East Kalimantan must be directed at achieving gender-based social justice. The integration of modernization, dependency, and structural feminism theories confirms that development should not be gender-neutral. Instead, development must take the side of marginalized groups so that the benefits of development can be felt equally by all citizens, especially women.

East Kalimantan has made progress in human and gender development. However, structural inequality and patriarchal culture are still obstacles. Gender mainstreaming efforts must be followed by the provision of disaggregated data, institutional capacity building, and affirmation for women in strategic sectors. The results of this study found recommendations to the government to encourage women's representation of at least 30% in the legislature and executive; Expanding women's access to secondary and higher education; Developing village-based women's economic programs and the informal sector; improving maternal and child health in remote areas; and increasing the integration of PUG in regional development planning documents ¹⁸.

The gender gap is not an abstract statistic but shapes everyday life in profound ways. Qualitative

¹⁶ Michelle R. Brear and others, 'Conceptualisations of "Good Care" within Informal Caregiving Networks for Older People in Rural South Africa', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344, January (2024), 116597 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116597>>; Katherine Bristowe and others, 'Between Loss and Restoration: The Role of Liminality in Advancing Theories of Grief and Bereavement', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344, January (2024), 116616 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116616>>; Xiaogao Zhou, 'Care in Transition: Global Norms, Transnational Adaptation, and Family-Centered Gender-Affirming Care in China', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344, January (2024), 116658 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116658>>.

¹⁷ Zainal Abidin and others, 'Why Does Women's Underrepresentation Transpire in the Leadership of Indonesian State Islamic Universities?', *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 7.3 (2023), 878–92 <<https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v7i3.5914>>.

¹⁸ Widyatmike Gede Mulawarman and others, *Kajian Pembangunan Manusia Berbasis Gender 2019: Perempuan Kepala Rumah Tangga Miskin Yang Mempunyai Usaha Ekonomi Di Bontang, Samarinda, Dan Kutai Timur* (Istana Agency, 2020); Suryaningsi Suryaningsi and others, 'Legal Protection and Rehabilitation of Victims of Child Trafficking With the Purpose of Prostitution in Indonesia', *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues*, 24.6 (2021), 1–16; Widyatmike Gede Mulawarman, Laili Komariyah, and Suryaningsi, 'Women

narratives from the field show how inequalities in education, health, and political participation are closely linked to quantitative data ¹⁹.

For example, a teacher at Mahakam Ulu explained:

"Many girls drop out of school after junior high school because their families still prioritize boys' education. It limits their future opportunities."

This statement is consistent with the School Participation Rate (APS) data in East Kalimantan. For the 16–18 age group, the APS dropped to 81.50%, with the gap being sharper in remote areas such as Mahakam Ulu, where the HDI for females was only 63.17 compared to 75.85 for males.

A woman's health volunteer in Kutai Kartanegara highlights the challenges in maternal health care:

"In remote villages, pregnant women have to travel for hours to get to the clinic. This puts their lives at risk."

Health data for 2023 shows that there are still 29 maternal deaths in East Kalimantan, with Mahakam Ulu occupying the lowest position in antenatal visits (K1/K4). This illustrates that geographical distance and uneven distribution of health facilities have a direct impact on women's safety.

A women's rights activist in Berau reflects on gender-based violence (GBV):

"Many young women who experience violence feel compelled to leave school because of shame and lack of support. Most of them end up in early marriage, which deprives them of their opportunity to pursue further education."

This narrative underscores how GBV intersects with access to education, health care, and political participation. The data support this: at the provincial level, men's HDI (82.70) is higher than that of women (72.06), suggesting that

women are systematically lagging in human development achievement.

The most striking gap is found in Paser Regency, with a man's HDI of 79.48 and a woman's of only 58.14, a difference of about 21.34 points. This figure not only shows the disparity in achievement but also the reality that women face structural barriers in accessing education and health services.

In the economic dimension, women's income contribution is only 24.57% of total working income. Many women work in the informal sector with low wages or no wages. These limitations reinforce the cycle of intergenerational poverty, where girls from poor families find it increasingly difficult to continue their education ²⁰.

From the political side, despite the increase in the number of female legislators, representation in the legislature is still far from ideal. Only the Mahakam Ulu Regency has reached the quota of 30% female representation. In North Penajam Paser, representation is only 4%, reflecting the low number of women's votes in decision-making.

Inequality is also seen in the Gender Development Index (GDI). The provincial average reached 87.13, but Paser only recorded 73.15, indicating a gender-based development gap. A clear negative correlation between low GPI and low female HDI confirms the structural linkage between indicators.

These findings reveal that gender-responsive development in East Kalimantan still faces serious challenges. Despite the improvement in macro indicators, the inequality experienced by women daily proves that policies have not fully overcome structural barriers. Therefore, the integration of quantitative data and qualitative narratives provides a more complete picture of how gender social justice should be fought at the local level.

and Leadership Style in School Management: Study of Gender Perspective', *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16.2 (2021), 594–611 <<https://doi.org/10.18844/CJES.V16I2.5638>>.

¹⁹ Nadia von Benzon, Jo Hickman-Dunne, and Rebecca Whittle, "My Doctor Just Called Me a Good Girl and I Died a Bit Inside": From Everyday Misogyny to Obstetric Violence in UK Fertility and Maternity Services', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344.January (2024), 116614 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116614>>; Anne Mette Hermans and others, 'Oops I Did It (Again): Patient Experiences of Complications after Non-Invasive Cosmetic Procedures', *Social Science and Medicine*,

344.November 2023 (2024), 116685 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116685>>; Edith Aguirre, Michaela Benzeval, and Aja Murray, 'Parental Gender Attitudes and Children's Mental Health: Evidence from the UK Household Longitudinal Study', *Social Science and Medicine*, 344.January (2024), 116632 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116632>>.

²⁰ Janaína Calu Costa and others, 'Measures of Women's Empowerment Based on Individual-Level Data: A Literature Review with a Focus on the Methodological Approaches', *Frontiers in Sociology*, 8 (2023) <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1231790>>.

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains an urgent challenge in East Kalimantan, especially in rural communities and indigenous areas. Insights from field interviews reveal that such violence goes beyond direct physical harm and carries profound implications for women's access to education, health care, and political participation. As one women's rights activist from Berau explained:

A women's rights activist from Berau commented:

"Many young women who experience violence feel compelled to leave school because of shame and lack of support. Most of them end up in early marriage, which deprives them of their opportunity to pursue further education."

The 2023 Human Development Index (HDI) data reveal that, while East Kalimantan as a province is categorized as having a "high" level of human development, significant gender gaps remain across all districts and cities. The most striking imbalance appeared in Paser, where men recorded a GPA of 79.48 compared to just 58.14 for women, a gap of 21.34 points.

In East Kalimantan, the state of women's economic involvement has yielded favorable results. In East Kalimantan, women's roles have evolved in terms of contributing to policymaking, making them appear more equitable and sensitive to gender equality. The quality of women's empowerment can be improved by their involvement in the formal sector, which will increase the achievement of regional and national economic development in the future. (Purba, 2024)

Such gaps highlight the persistence of structural barriers that prevent women from accessing education, health care, and economic opportunities to the fullest. In contexts such as Paser and other peripheral regions, women's lower HDI is not only a reflection of individual disadvantage but a manifestation of systemic inequality reinforced by patriarchal norms, unequal distribution of public services, and limited representation in political decision-making. This suggests that improvements in aggregate development indicators do not automatically translate into equitable outcomes for women, underscoring the urgent need for gender-responsive policies that directly address these structural constraints.

This significant gap implies that women in certain areas continue to be excluded from the benefits of social and economic progress. More than just numerical differences, these disparities expose perennial systemic injustices that deny women access to good health care, education, and economic opportunity. In reality, these circumstances limit women's capacity to fully enjoy their civil rights and suggest that development methods risk perpetuating rather than eradicating patterns of exclusion if not supported by strong gender-sensitive interventions.

Conclusion

The study found that although East Kalimantan shows relatively high human development and gender achievements at the macro level, gender inequality is still evident in various dimensions. Quantitative data showed significant differences between male and female HDI, especially in suburban areas such as Paser and Mahakam Ulu, with a difference of more than 20 points. The low political representation of women, on average, only 16% of legislative seats, even though more than 50% of voters are women, further confirms the existence of a representation gap.

The qualitative findings reinforce this picture by showing how structural barriers and social norms limit women. Field narratives reveal that girls in rural areas are more vulnerable to dropping out of school, pregnant women in remote areas face a high risk due to limited access to healthcare, and victims of gender-based violence often lose educational and economic opportunities.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data reveals that development that looks positive at the aggregate level has not been fully felt by women in daily life. Therefore, the gender-responsive development strategy in East Kalimantan should be directed to: (1) strengthening women's political representation by enforcing a 30% quota, (2) expanding access to secondary and tertiary education for girls, (3) improving maternal and child health services in suburban areas, (4) strengthening legal protection against gender-based violence, and (5) increasing women's participation in the formal economy. With a holistic approach based on mixed methods, this study confirms that gender equality is an

absolute requirement for realizing social justice and sustainable development in East Kalimantan.

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