

IDENTIFICATION OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN REALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality is a key issue in efforts to achieve sustainable and inclusive development throughout the world. This article discusses the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality in society. The main challenges faced are gaps in access to education, employment and political decisions, as well as gender stereotypes that are deeply rooted in culture and social structures. But amidst these challenges, there is a huge opportunity for positive change. These opportunities include increasing public awareness and support for gender equality, expanding advocacy and support efforts, and developing technology that enables broader access and participation for women. By leveraging dynamic cross-sector collaboration and joint efforts between governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society, we can bring about meaningful change towards improving gender equality. By analyzing these challenges and opportunities, this article provides insight into strategic steps that can be taken to achieve sustainable and inclusive gender equality in society.

Keywords: *Gender Equality; Challenges and Opportunities; Gender Stereotypes; Gender Discrimination and Society.*

Introduction

Gender equality is a reference that requires equal rights for all people, regardless of gender (Mustakimah et al., 2023). This includes equal rights to education, employment, health as well as participation in social and political life, as well as rejection of gender stereotypes and gender-specific discrimination (Fauziah et al., 2023). Gender equality is the foundation of a just and inclusive society. Indonesia already has various regulations that support the implementation of gender equality in all development sectors, but its implementation in the field is still not

running optimally (Judiasih & Padjadjaran, 2022). Efforts towards gender equality in the context of gender, sexual and reproductive health services are becoming increasingly urgent. Gender equality does not only mean providing equal rights to all people, but also ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, has equal access to appropriate health services. The issue of gender equality is closely related to aspects of women's reproductive health, especially in terms of women's limitations to make decisions related to their reproductive functions and rights. The social environment that tends to give priority to

men also reinforces this inequality. In Indonesia, there is still a stigma against women who experience reproductive health problems. In fact, the same health conditions in men and women are often treated differently, which leads to physical and sexual discrimination against women (Farchiyah et al., 2021). This article discusses the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality in the context of sexual and reproductive health and its impact on reproductive health services. The biggest challenge is the gap in access to sexual and reproductive health information, services and rights for men and women. Gender discrimination and social norms that limit individual freedom of choice regarding their bodies and health are also issues that need to be addressed (Akbar, 2024). In 2023, Komnas Perempuan received a total of 4,374 complaints, with 3,303 cases (around 75.5%) categorized as gender-based violence (GBV) (Perempuan, 2024). This shows that the majority of violence against women is still rooted in unequal power relations and discriminatory gender norms. In addition, the unequal distribution of resources such as funding and health workers can also hinder equitable access to reproductive health services. In addition, unequal distribution of resources such as funding and health workers can also hinder equitable access to reproductive health services.

However, efforts to achieve gender equality in sexual and reproductive health have a great opportunity to achieve positive change. The growth of a strong advocacy movement and increased awareness of the importance of gender equality in health services have paved the way for policy reforms and new practices that are more inclusive. In addition, advances in information and communication technology have made health information more widely and easily accessible on reproductive health services (Suryaningsih et al., 2024). This article aims to provide a foundation for the development of effective policies and strategies to achieve gender equality in sexual and reproductive health through a deeper understanding of these opportunities and challenges. Through the cooperation of governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society, we can create an enabling environment so that all people can achieve optimal sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination and inequality.

Method

This research employed a quantitative descriptive method to explore public perceptions regarding gender equality, including knowledge, challenges, and opportunities. Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire

distributed to a diverse group of individuals across various backgrounds, encompassing differences in gender, occupation, and age groups.

The sampling technique used in this study was random sampling, allowing each member of the population an equal chance of being selected. A total of 82 respondents participated in the survey. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items, which were designed to identify participants' understanding of gender equality and their perspectives on key barriers and enabling factors in realizing it within society.

To ensure the clarity and relevance of the instrument, the questionnaire underwent a brief validation process by experts in gender studies. The questions included both closed-ended items with Likert scales and multiple-choice responses, covering themes such as patriarchal culture, gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, and perceptions of gender roles.

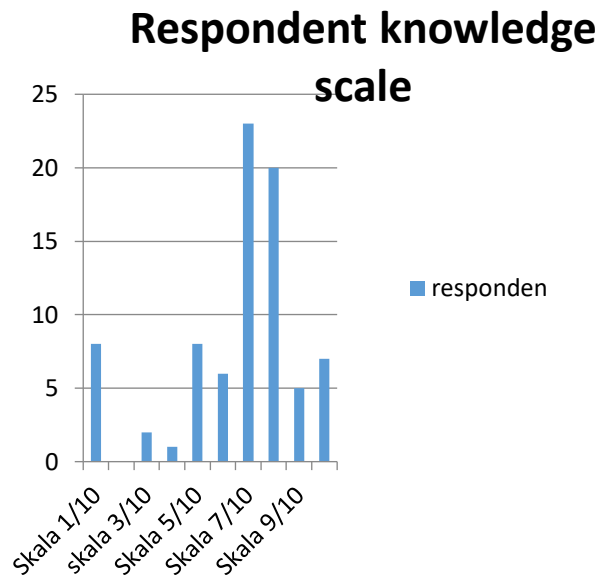
The data collected were analyzed descriptively using frequency and percentage distributions to identify general trends and patterns in respondents' answers. This approach provides a comprehensive overview of societal attitudes toward gender equality and the structural barriers that hinder its implementation.

Results

The research obtained respondents with various ages, genders and statuses, with the aim of identifying what are the challenges and opportunities in realizing gender equality in society with the perspective of the community itself. Based on the results of the questionnaire, 28 respondents aged 19 years, 7 respondents aged 18 years, 1 respondent aged 13 years, 2 respondents aged 17 years, 21 respondents aged 20 years, 3 respondents aged 21 years, 5 respondents aged 22 years, 1 respondent aged 23 years, 1 respondent aged 24 years, 1 respondent aged 25 years, 1 respondent aged 26 years, 4 respondents aged 27 years, 1 respondent aged 29 years, 1 respondent aged 33 years, 2 respondents aged 35 years, 1 respondent aged 43 years, 2 respondents aged 45 years. Of the 82 respondents, 70.7% of respondents were students, 6.1% of respondents were housewives, 19.5% of respondents were working and 3.7% of respondents were in other categories, 78% of respondents were female and 22% were male.

The questionnaire has 10 questions related to challenges and opportunities in realizing gender equality in society, the first item question on the questionnaire is "have you ever heard of gender equality?" this question can help identify how far the community knows what gender equality is and the results obtained 92.7% of

respondents answered yes. The second item on the questionnaire also helped to identify the depth of respondents' knowledge of gender equality, which was asked on a scale of 1-10, with the results:



The next 8 questions helped researchers identify opportunities and challenges in realizing gender equality from the community's perspective with detailed questions:

N o	Question (Challenge)	Result	Question (Opportunity)	Result
1	Do you believe that patriarchal culture (men should lead) is still a major challenge in realizing gender equality?	79.3% of respondents answered yes	Do you feel that equal access to education for all genders is important?	92.7% of respondents answered yes
2	Do you agree that discrimination (unfair treatment	86.6% of respondents answered yes	Do you agree that technology and innovation can be a	97.6% of respondents answered yes

	to a party) in the workplace is one of the barriers to achieving gender equality?		tool to broaden people's understanding of gender equality?	
3	Do you believe that gender-based violence is one of the most significant challenges to achieving gender equality?	90.2% of respondents answered yes	Do you feel that early gender education can help change society's perception of gender equality?	90.2% of respondents answered yes
4	-	-	Do you agree that the younger generation has an important role in driving social change towards gender equality in Indonesia?	98.8% of respondents answered yes
5	-	-	If one day you were in a position like, (in a general context) you were led by a woman then would you be willing?	87.8% of respondents answered yes

Discussion

The results of this study show that the majority of respondents realize that patriarchal culture is still a major challenge in realizing gender equality in society, with 79.3% agreeing to the statement. In addition, gender-based violence was recognized as one of the major obstacles in achieving equality, as expressed by 90.2% of respondents. These findings reinforce the premise that unequal power relations between men and women are still very strong in the social structure of society.

Patriarchy is a system of male dominance that operates in various social institutions, including the family, workplace and media. In the context of the results of this study, people's perceptions of male dominance as leaders and the normalization of gender-based violence are concrete forms of patriarchal structures that are still entrenched (Halizah et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the results also showed that 86.6% of respondents agreed that discrimination in the workplace is an obstacle to gender equality, and 87.8% expressed their willingness to be led by women. On the one hand, this indicates that while patriarchal values are still strong, there is potential for social change as shown by the openness of society to female leadership and the importance of equal

access to education (agreed by 92.7% of respondents).

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the community has a sufficient level of knowledge and understanding of gender equality. This can be seen from the respondents' high awareness of the importance of equal access and recognition of the various forms of structural barriers that women still face, especially gender-based violence in the form of verbal, physical, psychological and socio-economic.

This finding confirms that the social system that places men as dominant actors still perpetuates unequal power relations and reinforces discrimination against women. The patriarchal culture that is deeply embedded in social institutions is a major challenge in realizing a gender-just society.

However, there are great opportunities for change, one of which is the potential of the younger generation as agents of social transformation. Respondents' positive responses to women's leadership and the importance of early gender education point to a promising direction for social change. By strengthening gender literacy, expanding advocacy and encouraging cross-sector collaboration, sustainable gender equality

can be realized more quickly in Indonesian society.

As a follow-up to the findings of this study, collaborative efforts are needed involving all elements of society, from the government, educational institutions, civil society organizations, to the private sector, in dismantling the patriarchal structure that is the root of gender inequality. The government is expected to strengthen gender-responsive regulations and expand the range of protection services for women victims of violence, both in the domestic and public spheres.

In the context of education, it is very important to integrate gender equality education from an early age so that a critical understanding of rights and social justice is formed in the younger generation. The younger generation, as identified in this research, has great potential as agents of change. Therefore, youth empowerment through training, digital literacy with a gender perspective, and involvement in public advocacy must be expanded and facilitated on an ongoing basis.

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