

Gender Equality in the Social Life of Modern Society

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Abstract

Modernization has expanded opportunities for women's participation in education, employment, and public life, yet gender inequality persists within social structures and cultural norms. This article aims to examine gender equality in modern social life, identify the forms and social impacts of gender inequality, and analyse efforts to promote equality. The study adopts a qualitative literature review approach, drawing on books, scholarly journal articles, and relevant academic publications concerning gender, modernization, and social relations, particularly in Indonesia, including Bali. The literature is examined through descriptive-analytical procedures involving thematic categorization, comparison, and interpretation. The review identifies discrimination, stereotyping, marginalization, and gender-based violence as persistent forms of inequality. These conditions restrict access to education, employment, decision-making, and social participation, while gender-role expectations constrain individual opportunities and reinforce unequal relationships. Efforts to address these problems include strengthening gender literacy, fostering equitable roles within families and communities, implementing gender-responsive institutional policies, protecting individuals against discrimination and violence, and encouraging men's participation in equality initiatives. The study concludes that modernization alone is insufficient to ensure gender equality. Progress requires coordinated educational, institutional, and cultural changes that translate equal rights into opportunities for participation in everyday social life.

Keywords: Gender Equality; Gender Inequality; Modernization; Gender Literacy; Social Participation

Introduction

Modernization has expanded access to education, employment, communication, and public participation, creating opportunities for changes in the roles and relationships of men and women. However, these changes do not automatically eliminate gender inequality. Established expectations concerning domestic responsibilities, leadership, and decision-making may continue to shape participation even when formal opportunities become more widely available. In Indonesia, understanding gender equality therefore requires attention to the interaction between socioeconomic change and the social and cultural norms governing everyday life. Astrini (2025) discusses modernization in relation to the cultural resilience of customary communities, while Cameron (2023) examines gender equality and development in Indonesia within a global context. These perspectives situate gender equality within a broader discussion of social transformation and the persistence of established social arrangements.

Gender equality refers to equal rights, opportunities, and treatment in different spheres of life, including education, employment, politics, and social interaction (Judiasih, 2022). The recognition of these rights needs to be accompanied by conditions that enable individuals to exercise them. Social expectations may restrict access to resources, influence the division of responsibilities, and determine whose contributions receive recognition. Fakhri (2013) identifies marginalization, subordination, stereotyping,

violence, and unequal workloads as manifestations of gender injustice. This perspective highlights the importance of examining the social relationships through which inequality is reproduced, alongside the formal recognition of equality.

In Indonesia, the expansion of opportunities for women's participation coexists with barriers in employment, political representation, and community life. Larasati (2021) examines gender inequality through women's rights and legal protection, including discrimination in the workplace. Qodir et al., (2023) discuss gender equality within Indonesian democracy in relation to Islamic conservatism and populism, demonstrating the relevance of political and ideological contexts to the debate. From a sociocultural perspective, Herdania et al., (2025) examine patriarchal culture and gender hierarchies. Taken together, these studies suggest that gender inequality involves interconnected legal, institutional, and cultural conditions that influence access to opportunities and the acceptance of women's participation.

The Balinese context further illustrates the importance of examining gender relations within specific social arrangements. Dewayani (2022) discusses gender equality in inheritance under the Balinese patrilineal customary system through a case study in Blimbingsari Village. The study brings attention to the relationship between kinship arrangements and women's rights within a particular customary setting. Pramiswari et al., (2023) examine gender equality in public health service policies and identify challenges associated with social and cultural norms. These studies indicate that the implementation of equality needs to be understood in relation to the local settings in which policies and customary practices operate.

Women's involvement in community activities also raises questions about the relationship between participation and decision-making. Putra (2023) reports women's active involvement in managing the Tukad Bindu tourist attraction in Denpasar, while noting limitations in their administrative representation. Esaputra et al., (2025) examine how customary roles and gender perceptions relate to Balinese women's involvement in customary social activities. Read together, these findings suggest that participation in collective activities does not necessarily entail equivalent representation in positions of authority. They also underline the need to distinguish opportunities to contribute from opportunities to influence decisions. These locally situated findings enrich the discussion of gender equality without implying that all Balinese communities share identical experiences.

The consequences of gender inequality extend to economic access and the development of individual capabilities. Khasanah (2022) examines women's economic access through the MAMPU programme in Indonesia, highlighting the relevance of marginalization to participation in development. Sulisto et al., (2023) report a positive and significant relationship between indicators of women's development and empowerment and economic growth in Indonesia. Although this association does not independently establish a causal relationship, it supports the relevance of gender equality to development. Restricted access to employment, resources, and decision-making can limit the opportunities available to individuals and constrain their contributions to social and economic life.

Efforts to address these inequalities require connections between education, institutional practices, and community relationships. Khanifah and Legowo (2022) examine gender literacy and constructions of gender equality among young people, providing a basis for considering how education can challenge restrictive expectations. At the institutional level, gender mainstreaming offers a means of incorporating equality into organizational policies and practices (Andini et al., 2022). Protection against gender-based violence is also essential because opportunities for participation remain constrained

when individuals face violence and insecurity (Munasaroh, 2022). Rihi and Poerwandari (2023) discuss men's roles within women's movements, broadening the consideration of responsibility for equality. Together, these perspectives support an approach that connects gender literacy, institutional accountability, protection, and shared participation.

The literature discussed above addresses gender equality through distinct areas, including legal rights, political participation, economic access, institutional policy, and customary relationships. These different emphases provide a basis for examining how the dimensions of inequality interact across everyday social life. The contribution of this article lies in bringing these perspectives into a qualitative synthesis that connects the forms of gender inequality, their social impacts, and the efforts proposed to address them. Particular attention is given to Indonesia, including studies from Bali, to clarify how modernization interacts with cultural norms and institutional arrangements. The study's novelty is therefore located in this integrative analytical focus, rather than in a claim that gender equality itself is an unexplored subject.

Accordingly, this article addresses three research questions: how do modernization and sociocultural conditions shape gender equality in social life; what forms of gender inequality and associated social impacts are identified in the reviewed literature; and what efforts are proposed to promote equality at the family, community, educational, and institutional levels? The study aims to analyse these relationships through a qualitative literature review and synthesize the connections between unequal opportunities, social consequences, and responses. Its theoretical contribution is to clarify the relationship between expanding participation and the cultural and institutional conditions that enable or restrict equality. Its practical contribution is to identify interconnected areas of action for gender equality education, family practices, community participation, and institutional policy. This focus responds to the need to translate the recognition of equal rights into equitable opportunities and participation within everyday social life.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a narrative literature review to examine gender equality in modern social life. Literature was identified through searches in Google Scholar and consultation of library collections. The reviewed materials comprised books discussing gender, social change, and modernization, together with scholarly study addressing gender relations, inequality, and efforts to promote equality, particularly in Indonesia and Bali. Sources were selected according to their relevance to the research questions concerning modernization and gender equality, the forms and social impacts of inequality, and responses at the family, community, educational, and institutional levels. Original research study provided primary evidence from specific study contexts, while conceptual books and review study supported interpretation and comparison across themes. Data collection involved identifying relevant sources, examining their relevance, reading the selected materials in depth, recording information related to the research questions, and organizing that information thematically. Data recording and categorization sheets were used to document concepts of equality, manifestations of inequality, sociocultural factors, social consequences, and proposed responses. No human informants were involved because the study relied exclusively on documentary sources. Descriptive-analytical procedures involved identifying relevant concepts and findings, classifying information by theme, comparing similarities and differences across sources, and interpreting the relationships between cultural norms, institutional arrangements, and opportunities for participation. The synthesis was organized around gender equality and persistent inequality in modern social life, the

social impacts of inequality, and efforts to achieve equality. Conclusions were drawn within the scope of the reviewed literature. The exact search terms and a complete screening record could not be reconstructed, limiting the reproducibility of source selection.

Results And Discussion

1. Gender Equality and Persistent Inequality in Modern Social Life

The literature reviewed in this study presents gender equality as encompassing equal rights, access to opportunities, participation, and fair treatment in social life. Judiasih (2022) provides a conceptual basis for understanding equality across different spheres of community life, while Cameron (2023) connects gender equality with development in Indonesia. Considered together, these perspectives suggest that equality needs to be examined through both the recognition of rights and the conditions under which individuals exercise them. Access to education or employment constitutes an important dimension of equality, but its significance also depends on whether individuals can participate without discriminatory restrictions and obtain recognition for their contributions.

Modernization creates opportunities for changes in gender relations, yet the reviewed studies indicate that these opportunities coexist with established divisions of roles. Firdaus (2021) discusses Balinese women's experiences in domestic and public spaces, while Herdania et al., (2025) examine patriarchal culture and gender hierarchies. Their different emphases draw attention to a shared analytical problem: changes in the spaces available to women may occur without equivalent changes in expectations concerning their responsibilities or authority. This synthesis suggests that movement into public life should not be treated as sufficient evidence that unequal gender relations have disappeared. The relationship between public participation and domestic expectations remains relevant to understanding equality in everyday life.

A distinction between participation and decision-making emerges particularly clearly when the Balinese studies are compared. Putra (2023) reports women's active participation in managing the Tukad Bindu tourist attraction alongside limitations in administrative representation. Esaputra et al., (2025) connect women's involvement in customary social activities with customary roles and gender perceptions. While the former focuses on tourism management and the latter on customary activities, both direct attention to the conditions shaping women's involvement. Read together, their findings suggest that an assessment of equality should examine who contributes to collective activities and who has opportunities to influence their organization. Active involvement may coexist with limited representation in positions where priorities and resources are determined.

Customary rights and public services reveal further dimensions of this relationship. Dewayani (2022) examines inheritance within a particular Balinese patrilineal setting, whereas Pramiswari et al., (2023) address gender equality in public health service policies. These studies concern different domains, but both indicate that equality is mediated by the social arrangements through which rights and services are accessed. The inheritance study highlights kinship and customary rules, while the public service study draws attention to the interaction between policy and sociocultural norms. Their comparison supports an interpretation of gender inequality as context-dependent: similar commitments to equality may encounter different barriers across households, customary communities, and service institutions. These findings should therefore be understood within their respective settings rather than generalized to all Balinese communities.

Across the reviewed literature, discrimination, stereotyping, marginalization, and gender-based violence remain important manifestations of inequality. Fakih (2013) provides a framework for identifying these interconnected forms of injustice, while Larasati (2021) discusses their relevance to women's rights and employment. The synthesis developed here indicates that these forms can reinforce one another. Stereotypes may be used to justify restrictions on participation, while unequal access to resources or authority may reduce opportunities to challenge discriminatory treatment. Gender equality in modern social life consequently requires attention to the relationships between access, representation, recognition, and protection.

2. The Social Impacts of Gender Inequality

One impact identified in the reviewed literature is the restriction of opportunities to develop and exercise individual capabilities. Larasati (2021) discusses discrimination associated with employment, while Setyanti et al., (2024) examine female labour participation in managerial positions. These studies address related but distinct dimensions of workplace equality. Access to employment concerns entry into economic participation, whereas access to managerial positions concerns advancement and involvement in organizational decisions. Their comparison suggests that equality should be assessed across different stages of working life. Increased employment participation alone cannot demonstrate that opportunities for promotion, leadership, and influence are equally available.

Economic marginalization also has implications for participation beyond the workplace. Khasanah (2022) discusses women's economic access through the MAMPU programme in Indonesia, while Sulisto et al., (2023) report a positive and significant relationship between indicators of women's development and empowerment and economic growth. These findings operate at different analytical levels: the former examines access and marginalization within a programme context, whereas the latter considers associations with broader economic outcomes. Together, they establish the relevance of gender equality to both individual opportunities and development. However, the reported association with economic growth should not be interpreted as proof that every equality initiative produces a particular economic outcome. The more defensible conclusion is that women's access and empowerment deserve consideration within development analysis.

Gender inequality also affects the distribution of voice and influence in collective life. The contrast between women's active contributions and limited administrative representation in Putra's (2023) study suggests that participation can occur without equivalent opportunities to shape decisions. Esaputra et al., (2025) further indicate that customary roles and gender perceptions relate to women's involvement in social activities. The synthesis of these findings highlights the possibility that contributions may be recognized primarily within established roles, while authority remains distributed unequally. This pattern matters because participation includes the ability to express priorities and influence decisions affecting community life. Nevertheless, the extent and consequences of such restrictions must be assessed within the specific communities studied.

Gender-role expectations may also constrain interpersonal relationships and individual choices. Herdania et al., (2025) discuss patriarchal hierarchies, while Rihi and Poerwandari (2023) examine men's involvement in women's movements. These perspectives help explain why the pursuit of equality involves reconsidering expectations directed at both women and men. Roles treated as naturally or exclusively belonging to one gender can narrow opportunities for shared responsibilities and participation.

Recognizing these constraints does not imply that their effects are identical for everyone. Instead, it directs attention to how expectations interact with access to resources, authority, and support.

Gender-based violence represents a particularly serious barrier to equal participation. Munasaroh (2022) discusses violence in relation to the achievement of gender equality in Indonesia. Within the synthesis developed here, protection from violence is a condition for exercising rights and opportunities. Formal access to education, employment, or community activities becomes insufficient when participation occurs under threats or insecurity. This connection also clarifies why educational initiatives and opportunities for participation need to be accompanied by effective protection and institutional responses.

Overall, the reviewed findings connect gender inequality with restricted economic opportunities, unequal representation, and constraints on social participation. These consequences may interact, although the literature examined does not establish a single causal sequence applicable to all settings. The analytical contribution of this review is to bring these relationships into a common discussion while retaining the contextual differences among the studies. Modernization may expand opportunities in one domain while inequalities persist in another, making an assessment across several dimensions more informative than reliance on a single indicator of participation.

3. Efforts to Achieve Gender Equality in Modern Society

The comparison of findings suggests that responses to gender inequality need to address both individual understanding and the arrangements governing participation. Khanifah and Legowo (2022) examine gender literacy and constructions of equality among young people, while Andini et al., (2022) discuss gender mainstreaming in institutional policy. Their different areas of focus are complementary. Gender literacy can support the recognition of stereotypes and discriminatory practices, whereas institutional policy concerns the rules and procedures through which opportunities are distributed. The synthesis indicates that educational change and institutional reform should be connected, since greater awareness may have limited practical effects when discriminatory arrangements remain in place.

Gender equality education can be strengthened by connecting concepts with situations encountered in everyday life. The findings concerning workplace discrimination, customary participation, and administrative representation provide relevant material for examining how inequality operates across different settings (Esaputra et al., 2025; Larasati, 2021; Putra, 2023). As an implication of this review, learning activities could encourage participants to distinguish access from authority, identify restrictive expectations, and consider how responsibilities are allocated. This recommendation extends the discussion of gender literacy into practical reflection; it is not presented as an intervention whose effectiveness has been tested by this study.

Families and communities provide further settings in which expectations can be reconsidered. Fakhri's (2013) analysis of gender injustice and Firdaus's (2021) discussion of domestic and public spaces support attention to the relationship between everyday responsibilities and wider participation. An implication of their combined perspectives is that equitable opportunities require consideration of how household and community tasks are shared. Dialogue concerning these responsibilities may help identify arrangements that restrict participation. In customary settings, such dialogue needs to engage the particular practices and relationships concerned, rather than assume that all cultural traditions operate in the same way.

Institutional responses should also examine whether formal commitments are reflected in opportunities for advancement and decision-making. Andini et al., (2022) address gender mainstreaming in rank-related institutional policy, while Setyanti et al., (2024) examine women's participation in managerial positions. Putra's (2023) findings add a community management context in which active involvement and administrative representation differ. These studies collectively support attention to recruitment, advancement, and representation when assessing equality. As a practical implication, institutions and community organizations can review the criteria used to allocate positions and responsibilities and examine whether participants have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions.

Protection against discrimination and violence needs to accompany these efforts. Larasati (2021) emphasizes legal dimensions of gender inequality, and Munasaroh (2022) addresses gender-based violence. Their comparison links the recognition of rights with the conditions necessary for safe participation. This review therefore supports the development of accessible reporting arrangements and accountable responses as practical areas for consideration. However, the effectiveness of particular mechanisms would require further evaluation rather than being assumed from the existence of formal provisions.

Women's agency is also important in sustaining equality initiatives. Wiranata and Putri (2021) found that women activists in Bali constructed their activist identities through interpretations of discrimination and marginalization observed in their environments. Their orientations informed involvement in gender education, legal assistance, and the dissemination of equality norms. Compared with approaches centred on institutional policy, this study highlights how lived experiences and personal commitments shape collective action. The synthesis therefore suggests that equality initiatives should create space for women to define priorities and contribute their experiences to educational and community programmes.

Men's participation provides another dimension of collective action. Rihi and Poerwandari (2023) examine men's roles within women's movements, showing the relevance of discussing equality as a shared social responsibility. In the interpretation developed here, such involvement should support equitable relationships and women's opportunities to articulate priorities and exercise leadership. Its contribution should be considered through the changes it supports in everyday practices and organizational relationships. The synthesis therefore supports coordinated efforts linking gender literacy, equitable responsibilities, institutional practices, representation, and protection. These areas correspond to different barriers identified in the literature and should be adapted to their social contexts. The review does not establish a universally effective intervention. Instead, it clarifies why equality initiatives need to connect expanding opportunities with changes in the cultural and institutional conditions governing their realization. This provides a basis for gender equality education and for further research evaluating how these interconnected responses operate in particular communities and institutions.

Conclusion

This literature review concludes that modernization expands opportunities for participation but does not, by itself, ensure gender equality, because cultural expectations and institutional arrangements continue to shape access, representation, and authority. Across the reviewed studies, discrimination, stereotyping, marginalization, and gender-based violence constrain individual opportunities and equitable participation in economic and community life. Efforts to promote equality therefore need to connect gender literacy, equitable family and community responsibilities, institutional reform, meaningful

representation, and protection against discrimination and violence. The study contributes to the analysis of social issues by distinguishing participation from decision-making power and linking inequalities across domestic, economic, and customary settings. Its contribution to gender equality education lies in identifying these interconnected dimensions as a basis for critically examining everyday practices and developing context-sensitive responses. These conclusions remain bounded by the reviewed literature and provide a foundation for further empirical assessment of the proposed responses.

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