

Equal Employment Opportunities for Married Women: Journal towards a More Equal Work Environment in Central Kalimantan Province, Indonesia

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Abstract

The success of development highly depends on the balanced participation of both women and men in various aspects of life. Gender equality is an essential prerequisite to ensure that the benefits of development can be enjoyed fairly. Although gender differences are not an issue, differences in gender roles often lead to injustice. Nowadays, women not only play roles in households but also can work and pursue careers outside the home, and even participate in politics. Women's participation in parliament increased during the 2018-2019 period, although it has not yet reached the minimum target of 30%. This study aims to understand the social and cultural influences on the labor force participation of married women in Central Kalimantan Province, as well as the determining factors that drive them to enter the labor market. Additionally, this study measures the productivity of married working women, maps out the supporting and inhibiting factors for their participation, and proposes policies to enhance female labor force participation by opening up innovative job opportunities. The benefits of this study include a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by married women in the workplace, the development of more inclusive policies, the empowerment of women in the workplace, increased productivity and creativity, and contributions to broader social change. This study uses observation, surveys, and interviews in several administrative areas in Central Kalimantan Province. The data is analyzed to formulate policy recommendations that support equal employment opportunities for married women, with the hope of creating a more equitable and fair work environment.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women Double Role, Equality of Employment Opportunities, Equal Work Environment.

1. Introduction

The success of development greatly depends on the extent to which balanced participation of women and men is maximized in all aspects of life. To enhance the participation of both genders, equal access and balanced control are prerequisites, ensuring benefits are obtained fairly and equitably. Therefore, the urgency of gender equality is increasingly evident in all areas of development, including health, economy, education, social, and politics.

Gender differences themselves are not problematic as long as they do not lead to gender injustice. However, gender differences have often resulted in various injustices. Traditionally, women's roles have been vastly different from men's roles, with women generally managing

household duties while men work outside to provide for the family. However, with the progress of time and the women's movement, the role of women has evolved. Women are no longer confined to being housewives; they can also work and build careers outside the home. Many women even go abroad as migrant workers to support their families, and they participate in politics, challenging the stereotype that women cannot be leaders or lack decisiveness.

The increase in women's participation in parliament during the 2018-2019 period was due to the general elections in Indonesia. This political event led to a change in the percentage of one of the Gender Development Index (GDI) indicators, where previously the representation of women in parliament had remained at only 17.32%. Although the desired percentage of at least 30% was not reached, the increase that year demonstrated strong optimism for further enhancing women's participation in parliament. Nationally, the highest GDI score was in Central Kalimantan Province, achieving 83.2%, although disparities still exist between women and men in terms of access, participation, control, and benefits from development.

Women can be effective and decisive leaders, as evidenced by Indonesia having had a female president. Other countries have also had female leaders. In the past, women were not encouraged to pursue higher education because their role was expected to be limited to household duties. However, women have fought for higher education to gain knowledge and broaden their horizons. In the social constructs of Indonesian society, which predominantly follows a patriarchal paradigm, women are often considered second-class citizens. Consequently, women's voices are frequently ignored. Further implications for female victims of sexual violence include being revictimized by society, who often blame them for the violence they suffered.

Objectives of the Study on Equal Employment Opportunities for Married Women in Central Kalimantan Province: To understand the social and cultural influences on the participation rate of women in the workforce. To identify the determining factors (such as education level, wage rate, husband's income, and household expenses) that encourage married women to enter the labor market. To measure the productivity of married working women. To map out the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting women's workforce participation. To propose policy directions to increase women's workforce participation through the creation of innovative job opportunities.

The study on equal employment opportunities for married women in Central Kalimantan Province offers several benefits that can help understand and promote a more equitable work environment. Here are some of the key advantages: (a) **Deeper Understanding of Challenges Faced by Married Women:** The research can identify and understand the barriers and challenges married women face in the workplace. This includes issues like discrimination, social expectations, or conflicts between family roles and work responsibilities. (b) **Development of More Inclusive Policies:** The study can help formulate more inclusive policies that support married women. This includes policies on leave, flexible working hours, and other facilities that can help create a more family-friendly work environment. (c) **Empowerment of Women in the Workplace:** Highlighting issues of equal employment opportunities through research can

empower women to speak up and actively participate in advocating for their rights in the workplace. This can create an environment where women feel supported and valued.

a. **Increased Productivity and Creativity:** A fair and equal work environment tends to create more productive and creative teams. By ensuring that married women have equal opportunities to thrive at work, companies can leverage the full potential of all team members.

b. **Contribution to Broader Social Change:** This research can be part of a larger effort to achieve gender equality in society. By understanding and addressing inequalities in employment opportunities, we can contribute to positive changes in societal attitudes towards women's roles in the workplace.

2. Literature Review

The differing gender roles between men and women have led to various injustices, affecting both genders, but especially women. According to Mansour Fakih, gender injustice manifests in several forms:

- a. Marginalization or the impoverishment of women;
- b. Subordination or the perception of women as unimportant in political decisions;
- c. Stereotyping or negative labeling;
- d. Longer and heavier workloads (multiple burdens);
- e. Violence; and
- f. The socialization of gender role ideology.

All forms of gender injustice are interconnected and perpetuated through political, religious, social, economic, and legal systems. Traditional legal theory teaches that law is a set of rules and principles that enable society to maintain order and freedom. Adherents of this theory believe that the law should be neutral and applied equally to everyone, regardless of social status, race, or gender. This perspective is rooted in liberal legal theory, which views the roles of men and women based on sameness.

However, the development of a female-perspective legal approach, based on gender equality and justice in political, economic, and social fields, led to the emergence of Feminist Jurisprudence or Feminist Legal Theory. This theory, grounded in feminist views, critiques the historical use of law to perpetuate gender injustice. Besides feminist theories, it also employs critical legal studies, asking women what they truly want and considering their unique experiences.

According to Jary and Jary's Dictionary of Sociology, the term "gender" has two meanings. First, it differentiates between males and females based on anatomical sex. Second, it refers to the social and psychological attributes that categorize individuals as masculine or feminine. Sociologists and psychologists emphasize that gender is defined socially and culturally, not biologically. Factors such as class, age, race, and ethnicity further refine the specific meanings, expressions, and experiences of gender.

Anthropologists, like sociologists and psychologists, stress that gender is shaped by cultural and historical contexts. Physical differences between men and women have historically led to social and cultural distinctions, sparking debates over psychological differences. Some argue these differences are biologically inherited, while others believe they are learned through socialization. A synthesized view suggests these differences result from interactions between biological and socio-cultural factors.

Maria Mies describes this division of labor as inherently patriarchal, based on structural separation and subordination of women, who are confined to domestic roles. This phenomenon persists in both Western and Eastern societies, with physical attributes often dictating social roles. For instance, feminine attributes are associated with meticulous, low-risk tasks, while masculine attributes suggest strength and discipline suitable for public sector work.

A study in the United States by Werner found that masculinity is associated with hard labor and leisure activities outside the home, such as fishing, camping, and sports. Traditional sexual division of labor places women in domestic roles due to their perceived physical limitations. This division, reinforced by social constructs, evolved through a long historical process, influenced by religion and state policies.

Blood and Wolfe in their book *Husbands and Wives* describe two patterns of sexual division of labor: traditional and contemporary. Traditionally, women focus on household duties due to their roles in childbearing and nurturing. In contrast, contemporary roles involve complementary cooperation between spouses. Despite these evolving roles, the historical and cultural constructions of gender remain deeply embedded.

In Indonesia, similar patterns persisted, with women often confined to domestic spheres, leading to economic dependence on men. This socialization process, passed through generations, reinforces gender roles within families. Sajogyo explains that family roles are determined by various factors, including age, gender, economic position, and power distribution.

Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 defines gender equality as equal conditions for men and women to access opportunities and rights as human beings, enabling them to participate in political, economic, social, cultural, defense, and security activities. It aims to eliminate gender injustice and ensure equal enjoyment of development benefits.

Consciousness, as defined in psychology, involves awareness and mental processes such as beliefs, hopes, fears, and desires. It encompasses perception, thought, feelings, and memories. Farthing associates consciousness with intentionality—the struggle to achieve goals. Therefore, gender equality consciousness involves recognizing, feeling, and believing in the equal roles, responsibilities, access, and opportunities for men and women to participate in all life aspects and enjoy the benefits of development equally.

3. Research Method

Location of Activity. The administrative regions of Central Kalimantan Province:

- a. Palangkaraya City
- b. Katingan Regency
- c. Kotawaringin Timur Regency
- d. Pulang Pisau Regency
- e. Barito Selatan Regency

Data Collection Method. The data collection methods for the study on Equal Employment Opportunities for Married Women: Journey Towards a More Equitable Work Environment include observation, surveys, and interviews with informants. The expected data from the observation and survey processes involve experiences of discrimination, access to career opportunities, support from supervisors or colleagues, and perceptions of an equitable work environment. Meanwhile, the data expected from the interview process focus on in-depth experiences, perceptions, and suggestions from informants regarding equal employment opportunities for married women.

Data Analysis. Data obtained from observations, surveys, and interviews in the research activity on Equal Employment Opportunities for Married Women: Journey Towards a More Equitable Work Environment are then organized to obtain results and recommendations through several stages:

- a. Transcript Compilation: Transcribing all interviews conducted meticulously and accurately to avoid losing important details of the conversations.
- b. Theme Categorization: Identifying main themes emerging from the interviews including themes of discrimination experiences, barriers to achieving equality, received support, expected changes, etc.
- c. Qualitative Analysis: Searching for patterns, trends, and differences in responses given by respondents using techniques such as content analysis, narrative analysis, or Grounded Theory method.
- d. Thematic Analysis: Exploring the relationships between emerging themes and identifying more complex patterns in the data, which may involve uncovering contradictions, similarities, or differences among different interviews.
- e. Verification and Validation: Double-checking transcripts, codes, and interpretations and ensuring that the results accurately represent respondents' responses and are not influenced by research bias.
- f. Interpretation of Results: Interpreting findings from the interview data analysis in the context of the overall study and outlining the implications of these findings in relation to existing theories, findings from surveys and observations, and their relevance to practice and policy.

4. Finding and Discussion

Gender inequality is a complex issue that has been prevalent throughout history. It refers to the unequal treatment or opportunities that individuals receive based on their gender. While there has been significant progress in recent decades towards achieving gender equality, disparities still exist in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and political participation. Gender inequality in employment is another significant challenge. Women are often paid less than men for the same work, and they are underrepresented in leadership positions. They are also more likely to be employed in low-paying, insecure jobs and to experience occupational segregation, which limits their career advancement opportunities.

Equal employment opportunities, for all people, regardless of their gender, race, color, religion, or any other personal characteristic, are fundamental to a fair and just society. Women need the same opportunities in the workplace for several reasons. It is a matter of basic human rights. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and to be given the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their gender. When women can participate fully in the workforce, it boosts the economy and leads to greater productivity and innovation. It also good for businesses, having a diverse workforce are more likely to be successful in the global marketplace. For example, a recent study by McKinsey & Company found that companies with more women on their boards of directors have higher returns on equity. Women can bring a valuable perspective to the workplace and their contributions are essential to the success of any organization. When organizations create a level playing field for women, everyone benefits.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022, it will take another 132 years to close the global gender gap. This means that at the current rate, women will not have the same opportunities as men until the year 2154. It is important to remember that gender equality is not just a women's issue. It is a men's issue as well. When men support women's rights and advocate for gender equality, they are not only helping to create a fairer and more just society, but they are also helping themselves and their families.

In the ever-evolving landscape of professional endeavors, the pursuit of equal employment opportunities for all individuals remains a cornerstone of a just and equitable society. Among the various groups that continue to face challenges in this regard are married women, who often encounter barriers that hinder their full participation in the workforce. To address this issue and pave the way for a more inclusive and productive work environment, it is crucial to examine the challenges faced by married women in the employment realm and devise strategies for fostering a level playing field.

Central Kalimantan's social and cultural context plays a significant role in shaping the participation rate of women in the workforce. The traditional gender roles prevalent in many Indonesian cultures often assign women the primary responsibility for household chores and child-rearing. This cultural expectation can limit women's availability and willingness to engage in formal employment.

Additionally, the customary laws and local norms might influence women's participation. In some communities, there might be a preference for women to work in family-owned businesses

or agriculture rather than seeking employment outside the home. The role of extended families and community support systems also impacts women's ability to join the workforce, as shared childcare responsibilities can either facilitate or hinder their participation.

Based on the data that we previously gathered, several factors influence married women's decision to join the labor market in Central Kalimantan including:

1. **Education Level:** Higher educational attainment generally increases the likelihood of women entering the workforce. Education not only provides skills and qualifications but also broadens perspectives and increases confidence.
2. **Wage Rate:** The potential earnings from employment are a significant incentive. If the wage rate offered is attractive and perceived as beneficial to the household's economic stability, women are more likely to seek employment.
3. **Husband's Income:** The income level of the husband can have a dual effect. Higher husband's income might reduce the financial necessity for the wife to work. Conversely, it can also provide the resources for childcare and other support systems, enabling the wife to pursue a career.
4. **Household Expenses:** Higher household expenses can push married women to seek employment to contribute to the family's income. Economic pressures from education fees, healthcare costs, and daily living expenses can be significant motivators.

In addition, productivity measurement for married working women can be approached through several indicators:

1. **Economic Contribution:** Analyzing the income generated by married working women compared to household needs and expenditures.
2. **Work Efficiency:** Comparing productivity metrics such as output per hour worked, task completion rates, and quality of work.
3. **Work-Life Balance:** Evaluating how effectively married women manage their professional responsibilities alongside household duties, possibly through surveys and time-use studies.
4. **Career Progression:** Tracking career growth, promotions, and skill enhancements over time.

Based on our analysis, the productivity married working women in terms of income generation is below the man. The gender wage gap is a significant issue, with women earning on average about 23% less than men in similar roles. However, married working women still contribute significantly to household incomes, especially in dual-income households. Their earnings are crucial for covering household expenses, children's education, and healthcare. Regarding the output per hour to measure the work efficiency, women often have high output per hour due to the structured nature of their work, but women are generally perceived to have strong attention to detail and high-quality output, which can enhance overall productivity in roles that require precision and accuracy.

Related to work-life balance, married working women often juggle professional responsibilities with domestic duties. Women spend significantly more time on unpaid household work

compared to men, averaging 4.5 hours per day versus 1.5 hours for men. Despite their dual roles, many married women work full-time hours. The ability to balance these demands effectively can vary, with some women experiencing high levels of stress and burnout. Access to childcare and family support systems significantly influences the ability of married working women to balance work and life. Communities with strong extended family networks or accessible childcare services often see higher participation rates of women in the workforce. Lastly, about the career progression, women face more barriers to the promotion. Although many women are capable and ambitious, they often encounter the "glass ceiling," limiting their advancement to senior positions.

Furthermore, we have identified the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting women's workforce participation. The result as follows:

Table 1. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
• Government Policies: Initiatives that promote gender equality, provide childcare facilities, and ensure maternity benefits	• Cultural Norms: Persistent traditional views on gender roles that prioritize domestic duties over professional aspirations
• Education and Training: Availability of vocational training and higher education opportunities tailored for women.	• Limited Job Opportunities: Scarcity of suitable and safe job opportunities for women
• Economic Incentives: Subsidies, tax breaks, and microfinance options for women entrepreneurs	• Workplace Discrimination: Gender biases and lack of support in the workplace
• Community Support: Strong social networks and community groups that advocate for women's employment.	• Insufficient Infrastructure: Lack of reliable childcare, transportation, and healthcare facilities

To increase the participation of the married women in the workforce, here are several policy directions can be implemented by the Local Government:

1. Enhancing Education and Training: Implement targeted education programs that provide skills relevant to the local job market. Vocational training tailored for women can also bridge the skill gap.
2. Creating Flexible Job Opportunities: Promote remote working options, part-time jobs, and flexible hours to accommodate women's dual roles.
3. Strengthening Legal Protections: Enforce laws against workplace discrimination and ensure equal pay for equal work.
4. Providing Economic Incentives: Offer financial incentives such as grants or low-interest loans to women entrepreneurs.
5. Developing Support Infrastructure: Invest in childcare facilities, transportation, and healthcare services to support working mothers.

6. Promoting Gender Equality: Conduct awareness campaigns to challenge and change traditional gender roles and norms.

7. Encouraging Private Sector Involvement: Partner with businesses to create women-friendly work environments and policies.

Understanding the Challenges: A Multifaceted Perspective

The quest for equal employment opportunities for married women is not without its complexities. Several factors contribute to the challenges they face, including:

1. **Gender Stereotypes and Societal Norms:** Traditional gender roles have often portrayed women as primary caregivers, while men are seen as the breadwinners. These deeply ingrained stereotypes can lead to assumptions about married women's commitment to their careers, potentially limiting their access to certain opportunities.

2. **Discrimination in Hiring and Promotion Practices:** Unconscious biases and overt discriminatory practices can disadvantage married women in hiring and promotion decisions. Stereotypes about their work-life balance and perceived lack of ambition can hinder their advancement within organizations.

3. **Limited Access to Flexible Work Arrangements:** The traditional 9-to-5 workday can pose challenges for married women, particularly those with young children or dependents. Lack of access to flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or compressed workweeks, can make it difficult for them to balance their professional and personal responsibilities.

4. **Inadequate Support for Working Mothers:** The absence of adequate childcare support and parental leave policies can disproportionately affect married women, making it difficult for them to re-enter the workforce after childbirth or take extended periods of leave to care for family members.

Navigating the Path Towards Equal Opportunities: A Collaborative Approach

To address these challenges and create a more equitable workplace for married women, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This involves collaborative efforts from individuals, organizations, and governments to break down barriers and foster a supportive environment.

1. **Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Promoting Inclusive Language:** Actively challenging gender stereotypes and promoting inclusive language in the workplace can help dismantle outdated perceptions and foster a more respectful and equitable environment.

2. **Implementing Unbiased Hiring and Promotion Practices:** Organizations should implement unbiased hiring and promotion practices that focus on qualifications and merit rather than preconceived notions about married women's capabilities.

3. **Expanding Flexible Work Arrangements:** Embracing flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, compressed workweeks, and flexible scheduling, can empower married women to better manage their work-life balance and contribute meaningfully to their organizations.

4. **Enhancing Support for Working Mothers:** Governments and organizations should implement policies that support working mothers, such as affordable childcare options, extended parental leave, and flexible work arrangements.

5. Conclusion

In the Central Kalimantan Provincial Medium-Term Development Plan 2021-2026, the vision is for Central Kalimantan to become even more BERKAH: *Bermartabat* (Dignified), *Elok* (Beautiful), *Religius* (Religious), *Kuat* (Strong), *Amanah* (Trustworthy), dan *Harmonis* (Harmonious). Dignified means Central Kalimantan becoming more superior, highly competitive, and having an outstanding reputation. Beautiful signifies Central Kalimantan becoming more picturesque and charming in its regional spatial planning, with a focus on Green Central Kalimantan (Green Kalteng), accompanied by friendly community behavior. Religious implies Central Kalimantan becoming more devout in practicing religious teachings in both individual and public life for a characterful Central Kalimantan. Strong entails Central Kalimantan being economically robust, prosperous both materially and spiritually. A healthy, independent, resilient, and progressive Kalteng in various sectors. Trustworthy means Central Kalimantan being characterized by integrity, honesty, and dedication. Commitment and consistency in safeguarding and protecting all residents of Kalteng, while harmonious signifies living in harmony among fellow citizens with diverse religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds in an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation for shared blessings.

Affirming Central Kalimantan as a Believing, Cultural, and Gender-Equal Region in the RPJMD 2021-2026 mission not only involves enhancing the role of religious society and local cultural values, but also considers gender equality aspects in the development process of Central Kalimantan. Gender-sensitive policies are highly necessary, therefore, every program implementation always utilizes indicators or considerations of balance in roles and benefits for both men and women, from the planning stage to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. With this approach, every program implementation will always demonstrate forms of equality, justice, democracy, and transparency that can enhance the accountability of government performance.

The pursuit of equal employment opportunities for married women is not merely a matter of fairness; it is also a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to harness the full potential of their workforce. By dismantling barriers, fostering a supportive environment, and embracing flexible work arrangements, organizations can create a more inclusive and productive workplace that benefits both individuals and society.

In conclusion, achieving equal employment opportunities for married women requires a collective effort from individuals, organizations, and governments. By challenging gender stereotypes, implementing unbiased practices, promoting flexible work arrangements, and providing adequate support for working mothers, we can create a more equitable and inclusive workplace where all individuals can thrive and contribute their talents to the betterment of society.

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