

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAJAMBON VILLAGE: INVOLVEMENT, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the roles, contributions, and challenges encountered by women in the development of Pajambon Village, located in Kramatmulya District, Kuningan Regency, West Java. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study explores the equal involvement of both women and men in the community, with no discernible gender disparities in their participation. The findings reveal that women in Pajambon Village make substantial contributions across various domains, including the management of household economies, participation in social activities, and involvement in the village governance structure. Additionally, women prioritize the education of their children and actively engage in workshops aimed at enhancing their skills and knowledge for village development. The local government has established a women's empowerment group, the Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK), which currently consists of 14 members. This group is further supported and encouraged by the government to engage in entrepreneurial activities that contribute to their economic independence. The study highlights the critical role of women in fostering community development and advancing sustainable rural progress.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence and discrimination against women remain significant and persistent challenges in Indonesia, deeply embedded in both cultural and institutional structures (Sinombor, 2024). These issues affect millions of women across the nation, manifesting in various forms such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and economic marginalization. According to the Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, in 2023 alone, there were 20,205 reported cases of domestic violence, underscoring the gravity of the situation (Rizaty, 2023). The troubling trend of rising cases has been evident over the past several years, with the number of reported incidents increasing from 18,141 in 2018 to 20,205 in 2023, marking an 11.35% increase over the last five years (LPPA, 2023). This escalation in domestic violence cases highlights the urgent need for more effective interventions and calls for a comprehensive response to address gender-based violence at both the policy and societal levels. In light of these persistent issues, it is essential to shift focus toward the empowerment of women as a strategic approach to combating discrimination and promoting gender equality. While addressing violence is crucial, equal attention must be given to enhancing the roles of women in regional and national development processes. Women's contributions to development are often undervalued or overlooked, yet they play critical roles in the economic, social, and political spheres of their communities (VOA Indonesia, 2022). Empowering women is not only a moral imperative but also a pragmatic solution to fostering more inclusive, sustainable development. The involvement of women in the planning, implementation, and supervision of regional development initiatives can lead to more effective, equitable, and community-driven outcomes.

Women's empowerment, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas, has the potential to create significant social and economic benefits. As such, ensuring gender equality and the active participation of women in development processes are key to creating a society where women can live free from violence, discrimination, and inequality. By recognizing women as active agents of change, the development process can be transformed into a more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable endeavor. As highlighted by Bappenas (2020), empowering women is not only vital for achieving gender equality but is also a critical factor in driving broader societal progress. This article aims to explore the relationship between women's empowerment and regional development, with a particular focus on the Indonesian context, where addressing gender disparities is essential for achieving lasting social change.

The underrepresentation of women in political and governance structures is a pervasive issue in Indonesia, particularly at the legislative level. Women currently make up only 20.5% of the total membership in Indonesia's legislative bodies, reflecting significant barriers to their participation in political decision-making. This low representation is largely due to a combination of inconsistent regulations and systemic gender discrimination within the political landscape. A particularly illustrative example of these challenges is Regulation No. 10 of 2023, issued by the Election Commission, which has been criticized for perpetuating gender inequities in the political domain. While the intention of the regulation may be to ensure a level playing field, it inadvertently weakens women's representation by failing to account for the additional responsibilities that women, particularly mothers, often bear in society. Women candidates, especially those with children, face a unique dilemma—balancing the demands of childcare with the extensive time commitments required for campaigning and attending legislative sessions. Furthermore, the regulation prohibits candidates from bringing children to political events, exacerbating the challenges faced by female political aspirants. These barriers are not confined to national politics but also permeate local governance, particularly in rural areas and villages, where traditional gender roles often place women in the domestic sphere, further limiting their participation in political processes (Sonya, 2024).

The challenges faced by women in political representation are also evident in the context of village leadership across Indonesia. A study conducted in 2022 revealed that only 5.5% of village heads, or approximately 4,120 out of 74,961 village heads nationwide, were women. Despite this, women have been making notable strides in local governance. For example, women represent 22.1% of all individuals engaged in village governance, demonstrating that their participation is significant, albeit still underrepresented. Among these, 17.7% of the members of the *Badan Permusyawaratan Desa* (BPD), the village consultative body responsible for policymaking and oversight, are women. This indicates that, despite the persistent challenges and gender norms that limit women's political opportunities, there are still avenues through which women contribute to the shaping of village policies and governance structures (Abdul, 2022). These figures suggest that women, though facing considerable obstacles, are gradually being integrated into the political fabric of rural Indonesia, albeit in a manner that reflects broader societal gender disparities.

In the specific case of Desa Pajambon, located in Kramatmulya District, Kuningan Regency, the involvement of women in local development processes is both significant and

multifaceted. Women in Pajambon play a crucial role in the growth of the local agricultural sector and the establishment of small-scale businesses, contributing to the economic vitality of the village. However, women in this region continue to encounter numerous challenges, particularly in terms of access to resources, education, and training, which limit their potential to fully participate in economic and developmental activities. Despite these challenges, women's contributions to community development remain substantial, especially in the areas of infrastructure, security, and social welfare. Women in Pajambon actively participate in the construction and maintenance of village facilities, as well as in ensuring the safety and security of the community. With women representing 50.23% of the village's total population, their involvement is critical to the overall development and progress of Pajambon, particularly in terms of ensuring that local initiatives are inclusive and reflect the needs and interests of the entire population (Godesa Pajambon, 2023).

Moreover, the participation of women in Pajambon extends beyond economic and infrastructural development to include significant social and environmental contributions. Women in the village have formed the *Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK) group, an initiative aimed at improving family welfare through empowerment programs that focus on education, health, and economic sustainability. These groups not only promote gender equality but also serve as platforms for women to share knowledge, develop leadership skills, and contribute to local policymaking. In addition to the PKK, women in Pajambon engage in a variety of community-driven environmental and social activities, including the *Jumat Bersih* (Clean Friday) program, which aims to promote environmental awareness and cleanliness in the village. These efforts demonstrate that, despite facing significant socio-economic and cultural barriers, women in Pajambon are integral to the social, economic, and environmental development of their village.

The role of women in Pajambon is emblematic of the broader potential for women's involvement in rural development across Indonesia. While women face structural barriers that limit their opportunities in both politics and economic participation, their contributions to village development are undeniable. By actively participating in local governance, economic development, and social welfare programs, women in Pajambon are not only challenging traditional gender roles but also driving the growth and sustainability of their communities. This highlights the importance of creating an enabling environment that allows women to overcome these barriers, through improved access to resources, education, and political opportunities.

Such initiatives are essential not only for promoting gender equality but also for fostering inclusive, sustainable development in rural areas. As the case of Pajambon illustrates, the empowerment of women is a crucial factor in the broader process of rural development, with the potential to transform communities and contribute to the achievement of national development goals.

The evidence from Desa Pajambon, along with broader trends in Indonesia, underscores the critical need for continued policy interventions that support women's participation in political, economic, and social spheres. In particular, policies that address the unique challenges faced by women, such as balancing domestic responsibilities with professional and political engagement, are vital to ensuring that women can fully realize their potential as leaders and contributors to development. Empowering women in rural communities like Pajambon can serve as a model for other regions in Indonesia and beyond, demonstrating the transformative impact that women's active participation in development can have on both local and national progress.

Women in Pajambon Village have demonstrated a strong social foundation through their engagement in various community activities. Despite their active participation, their involvement in key developmental processes remains limited, which prevents them from fully realizing their potential as agents of change. This gap highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the factors that hinder women's participation in the village's development. Addressing this issue is crucial, as empowering women and increasing their involvement can significantly contribute to the social, economic, and cultural growth of the village, fostering more inclusive and sustainable development. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how women in Pajambon Village can become more significant agents of change in their community's development. By examining their roles and contributions, this research seeks to identify both the tangible impacts women have made and the barriers that restrict their participation. Moreover, the study will offer actionable recommendations for enhancing women's empowerment and strengthening their involvement in village development, particularly in decision-making and governance processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global framework for advancing

societal well-being through a series of 17 interconnected goals and 169 targets, which are to be achieved by 2030. These goals emphasize human rights, equality, and justice, with a particular focus on fostering sustainable social, economic, and environmental development across the globe. The SDGs are designed to be universally applicable, transcending national borders to address the multifaceted challenges of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Central to the SDGs is the principle of gender equality, as embodied in Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The recognition that gender equality is not just a fundamental human right but also a critical enabler of sustainable development is a core tenet of the SDGs (United Nations, 2015). Empowering women, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, is seen as key to achieving all of the SDGs, as women's full participation in development processes is essential to building inclusive, resilient communities.

In the context of development, the roles of both men and women are not only complementary but equally crucial. This aligns with Parsons' (1951) social theory, which posits that roles are defined by organized expectations within specific interaction contexts. These roles shape an individual's orientation toward others and influence how individuals engage with the wider society. According to Parsons, roles are not inherent but are learned through socialization within a given culture, where individuals internalize cultural patterns and behavioral norms. As Scott (2011) notes, these social expectations shape people's understanding of who they are to others and what behaviors are considered appropriate in particular social settings. This framework suggests that gender roles—such as the division of labor between men and women—are culturally constructed and not biologically determined, which has significant implications for development processes. In societies where gender roles confine women to domestic spaces and limit their participation in public and political spheres, it becomes critical to challenge these norms to facilitate more inclusive and equitable development (Kusuma *et al.*, 2023).

Dozier (2011) expands on this theory by emphasizing that roles are sets of behaviors expected by others based on an individual's position within a social system. Roles, according to Dozier, are not static but evolve with societal changes, and individuals must adapt their behaviors to align with these shifting expectations. In the case of women's roles in development, these roles have historically been restricted by social norms and expectations that often relegated women to subordinate positions. For example, women's roles in many rural areas have traditionally been centered around household duties, caregiving, and supporting

male-dominated economic activities. As such, women's contributions to broader social, economic, and political development have often been undervalued or overlooked (Rural Development Commission, 2012). However, as gender norms evolve and women gain greater access to education and economic opportunities, their roles in development are expanding, and they are increasingly recognized as essential agents of change.

The concept of gender equality is also deeply rooted in historical-philosophical perspectives. Scholars such as Plato (2000) argued that women, despite differences in physical strength, possess the same intellectual and spiritual capacities as men. Plato's view suggests that women's contributions to society should not be limited or undervalued because of physical differences. Although he acknowledged that men and women may differ in their roles within the family or society, he also emphasized that both genders are capable of fulfilling roles of leadership, intellectual achievement, and civic responsibility (Plato, 2000). Plato's assertion that women possess equal intellectual and moral capabilities aligns with contemporary perspectives on gender equality, which emphasize that men and women, despite biological differences, should have equal opportunities to participate in all areas of societal life. Modern feminist scholars, such as Beauvoir (1949) and Friedan (1963), have built upon this philosophical tradition by challenging the notion that women's roles should be confined to the private sphere and advocating for equal participation in public life, governance, and economic development.

This foundational perspective on gender equality holds significant implications for the development of rural communities. In many rural and developing regions, women have long been excluded from formal decision-making processes and have faced barriers to accessing resources, education, and economic opportunities. However, there is growing recognition that the empowerment of women is not just a moral imperative but an essential factor for achieving sustainable and inclusive development (Ascholani, 2020). According to the World Bank (2012), when women have access to education and economic resources, they contribute to higher household incomes, improved child health and education outcomes, and overall community resilience. Additionally, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2011) reports that women's participation in agriculture, if fully realized, could increase global agricultural productivity by up to 30%. This underscores the importance of overcoming gender-based barriers in development, particularly in rural areas where women's contributions to agriculture, local governance, and community well-being are often undervalued.

The gender gap in development is also reflected in the limited representation of women in governance and leadership positions, particularly in rural areas. Research by the UN Women (2020) highlights that women make up only a small percentage of elected officials globally, with women's representation in local governments and parliaments often falling below 30%. This underrepresentation results in policies and programs that may not fully address the needs and priorities of women, further entrenching gender inequalities in development outcomes. In the case of Pajambon Village, for instance, while women are involved in various community activities, their roles in decision-making and leadership remain limited, constraining their ability to drive the types of changes necessary for sustainable development. Increasing women's participation in local governance and policy-making processes is therefore critical to ensuring that development initiatives reflect the needs of all members of the community, including women.

In line with the SDGs, there is a growing emphasis on the need for gender-responsive development policies that ensure the full participation of women in all aspects of social, economic, and political life. The integration of gender equality into development frameworks not only promotes human rights but also enhances the effectiveness of development interventions. As gender gaps in education, healthcare, and economic participation continue to narrow, the potential for women to contribute to development increases exponentially. Empowering women to take on leadership roles, participate in policy-making, and access resources and opportunities is essential for achieving the SDGs and fostering sustainable development.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, as described by Bogdan and Taylor (2011), which focuses on producing descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words derived from the behaviors and experiences of individuals. Qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives and the nuances of their lived experiences. In this study, the goal was to explore the role of women in village development, specifically in Pajambon Village, by examining their involvement, contributions, and challenges through direct observation and interviews.

Data Collection Methods

To ensure alignment between the research objectives and the data sources, a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods was employed. These included:

1. Primary Data:

- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with informants who met the criteria of being women actively involved in village development. The primary informant in this study was Mrs. Selpiyanti, a woman involved in development activities in Pajambon Village. The interview aimed to gather in-depth information about her experiences, contributions, and the challenges faced by women in the context of village development.
- **Direct Observation:** After the interviews, direct observation was carried out in Pajambon Village to examine the ongoing development activities and the roles women play in these initiatives. The researcher observed various community activities, including meetings, workshops, and development projects, to assess women's involvement and influence in these processes.

2. Secondary Data:

- Relevant secondary data were gathered from various sources, including websites, previous research findings, and journal articles. These secondary sources helped contextualize the primary data and provided a broader understanding of the role of women in village development.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out in multiple stages:

1. **Initial Interview:** The first stage involved interviewing the primary informant, Mrs. Selpiyanti, who was selected based on her active involvement in village development activities. The interview focused on understanding her personal experiences, challenges, and perceptions of women's roles in the development process.
2. **Direct Observation:** Following the interview, the researcher conducted direct observation in Pajambon Village. This included attending community meetings and development activities where women were actively engaged. The goal was to observe the interactions, decision-making processes, and contributions of women in the development efforts of the village.

3. **Document Collection:** During the observation phase, several documents were collected to supplement the data, including activity reports, photographs, and videos of village development activities. These documents provided additional evidence to support the research findings and helped triangulate the data from interviews and observations.
4. **Seminars and Workshops:** Based on the findings from the interviews and observations, the researcher recommended the organization of seminars or workshops to increase community awareness about the important role of women in village development. These events were not part of the initial data collection but were identified as necessary for further engaging the community and disseminating the research findings.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative techniques. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes and patterns related to women's involvement in village development. The researcher examined the transcripts from interviews, field notes from observations, and documents to identify recurring topics, challenges, and contributions related to women's roles in development activities. This research method allowed for an in-depth exploration of the complexities surrounding women's participation in village development, providing valuable insights into their contributions and the challenges they face.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pajambon Village is located in Kramatmulya District, Kuningan Regency, in West Java, Indonesia. It is situated at the highest elevation in the Kramatmulya subdistrict (BPS, 2023). The village's economy is predominantly based on agriculture and plantations, with a significant portion of the land dedicated to farming. According to data from the local government, 48.4 hectares of land are allocated for agricultural use, and the most widely cultivated crop is red guava, which covers around 30 hectares (Pemerintah Desa Pajambon, 2023). This agricultural focus shapes the village's economic activities, with most residents engaged in farming. In addition to its agricultural base, Pajambon is known for its natural assets, such as the Cilengkrang Valley, which is a prominent feature in the village's environment (Putri, 2016). This valley holds potential for tourism development, offering opportunities for rural economic diversification (Putri *et al.*, 2017).

The demographic profile of Pajambon Village shows a population of 2,444, with 1,227 women, representing over 50% of the total population (Pemerintah Desa Pajambon, 2023). The

substantial proportion of women in the village offers a unique opportunity to focus on women's empowerment and their role in local development (Ascholani, 2020). The leadership of a female village head since 2021 (Jabarcenna, 2021) has been pivotal in improving the village's economic and tourism sectors, a rare but notable occurrence in Indonesia where only 5.5% of village heads are women (Yunita, 2023). Women in Pajambon Village are also active in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with 14 members of the Family Welfare Movement known as "PKK" running their businesses, thus further highlighting the significant economic role of women in the region.

The Importance of Women's Roles in Village Development

Women's involvement in rural development plays a critical role in improving the welfare of communities by contributing to the social, economic, and environmental aspects of village life. This multifaceted engagement is essential for fostering sustainable development and ensuring that the needs of all community members are addressed. According to Wula and Anggraini (2022), women's active participation in rural settings is not only beneficial for advancing the local economy but is also vital for improving educational outcomes, enhancing healthcare access, and boosting the overall quality of life in rural areas. Women, as both caregivers and community members, often have a nuanced understanding of the local context, making their contributions particularly important in shaping development initiatives that are inclusive and effective.

The Indonesian Government has recognized the importance of women's involvement in rural development through legal and policy frameworks. One such framework is Law No. 6 of 2014, known as the Village Law, which explicitly highlights the necessity of women's participation in village governance and development. This law emphasizes that women should be actively involved in decision-making processes and in the formulation of policies that directly affect the welfare of their communities (UU No. 6, 2014). By ensuring women's representation in village governance, the law aims to create a more balanced and equitable approach to development, where the needs and interests of women are adequately considered. In the context of Pajambon Village, the involvement of women in local development has made a profound impact, particularly through their participation in SMEs. These businesses, predominantly led by women, range from snack production to coffee shops and have become a significant source of income for many families. Women, especially housewives, who may otherwise have limited access to formal employment opportunities, find that managing or

owning these enterprises provides them with both financial independence and a sense of empowerment. According to data from the Village Government (Pemerintah Desa Pajambon, 2023), a large number of SMEs in the village are women-led, highlighting the important economic role women play in driving local economic growth.

The village government has played a supportive role in fostering women's entrepreneurship by implementing programs aimed at developing local products and enhancing business skills. These programs often provide training in areas such as business management, product innovation, and marketing strategies. Such initiatives have helped women entrepreneurs improve the quality of their products, streamline operations, and expand their customer base, which in turn stimulates the local economy. Moreover, the support from village authorities in promoting these businesses has ensured that women have the necessary resources and guidance to navigate the challenges they face as entrepreneurs.

In addition to their economic contributions, women in Pajambon Village have also been key players in advancing social welfare, particularly through their involvement in the PKK group. The PKK is a grassroots organization that empowers women by providing a platform for them to engage in activities that focus on education, health, and community development. In Pajambon, the PKK has played a vital role in facilitating access to health services, especially through the *Posyandu* (Integrated Health Post) program, as depicted in Figure 1. This program focuses on improving maternal and child health by providing essential health services such as immunizations, nutritional counseling, and health screenings. In addition to directly benefiting women and children, the *Posyandu* program has also contributed to raising broader awareness about health issues within the community, ensuring that people have the knowledge and resources to make informed health decisions.



Figure 1. *Posyandu* program held by the PKK

Beyond health, the PKK group in Pajambon has been involved in several environmental initiatives aimed at improving the local community's living conditions. One such program is *Jumat Bersih* (Clean Friday), which encourages villagers to participate in regular community clean-up activities. This initiative has not only improved the cleanliness of the village but has also helped raise awareness about the importance of maintaining a healthy environment. By leading these efforts, women in the PKK are fostering a sense of collective responsibility for environmental health, which is critical in preventing diseases and improving overall public health.

The work done by the PKK in these areas underscores the significant role women play in both community health and environmental sustainability. These programs help to create a more equitable and healthier community, where the voices of women are central to the decision-making processes that affect their daily lives. Furthermore, these initiatives exemplify how women, when given the opportunity and support, can drive positive change in their communities across multiple dimensions—economic, social, and environmental. The involvement of women in rural development in Pajambon Village serves as a powerful reminder of the critical role they play in shaping the future of their communities. Through their participation in SMEs, community health initiatives, and environmental programs, women in Pajambon have demonstrated their capacity to influence change and contribute to the overall development of their village. However, as Wula and Anggraini (2022) highlight, it is important to continue supporting and empowering women in rural areas to ensure their full participation in development processes. Only by fostering an inclusive environment where women's contributions are fully recognized and valued can sustainable development be achieved.

Women's Involvement and Contribution to Village Development

Women in Pajambon Village are actively engaged in village development, although their participation is influenced by familial and social expectations. Interviews with local women revealed that, while they are eager to contribute to the development process, their involvement is often contingent upon gaining approval from family members, particularly their husbands. This reflects the deeply entrenched traditional gender roles that still prevail in many rural areas of Indonesia, where women's primary responsibilities are generally seen as domestic. According to Wula and Anggraini (2022), such cultural norms often place constraints on women's active involvement in community development, particularly in settings where

patriarchal values dominate. The expectation that women's primary role is within the household means that they often face additional hurdles when seeking to participate in public or community affairs. However, despite these challenges, women in Pajambon Village have managed to play a pivotal role in shaping the development trajectory of their village. Their contributions have been especially evident in their involvement with the PKK program, a community-based organization primarily composed of the wives of village government employees. The PKK has become an important platform for women in Pajambon to address community concerns and contribute to decision-making processes.

Members of the PKK have been recognized for their ability to assess local issues with a high degree of attention to detail. For example, they have been instrumental in identifying the most pressing needs within the community, such as road repairs, the quality of water, and healthcare provisions. Their unique perspective as women, and often as mothers and caregivers, makes them particularly attuned to the needs of the broader community, especially in areas that affect daily life and well-being. Their involvement in identifying and addressing these issues has proven to be highly beneficial to the village's overall development (Pemerintah Desa Pajambon, 2023). This active participation not only enhances the effectiveness of development projects but also helps ensure that the solutions implemented are more inclusive and better aligned with the needs of all members of the community. In this way, women in Pajambon are proving that despite the challenges posed by traditional gender norms, their contributions are essential to the development and well-being of their village. Their role in local governance and development activities is, therefore, crucial for ensuring the sustainability and success of community initiatives.

The Role of Women in Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK)

The PKK group in Pajambon Village plays a critical role in enhancing the welfare of families through a wide range of activities that address key areas such as health, community outreach, and education. One of the group's core activities is its monthly meetings, which focus on a variety of pressing issues that affect the local population. These issues include maternal and child health, sanitation, nutrition, and overall community well-being. The meetings serve as a platform for disseminating important information, raising awareness, and facilitating discussions that lead to collective action for community improvement.

Through these regular engagements, the PKK helps ensure that the women of Pajambon Village are well-informed about health issues that directly impact their families. The group's focus on maternal and child health has been particularly influential, with many women learning about proper prenatal care, child nutrition, and the importance of regular health checkups. In addition to these health-oriented initiatives, the PKK has been actively involved in promoting sanitation practices to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment. This includes efforts to improve local hygiene and educate the community on best practices for waste disposal, water safety, and general cleanliness.

In addition to health and sanitation programs, the PKK has been instrumental in promoting local economic development. One of the notable initiatives supported by the group is the trial production of *Mie Buah Jambu Biji Merah* (Red Guava Noodles), a local product aimed at creating new income-generating opportunities for women in Pajambon Village (Nitsuga, 2023). This initiative has provided a way for women to not only engage in entrepreneurship but also to contribute to the local economy by offering a unique product that is tied to the village's agricultural resources. The development of this product has opened new avenues for income, particularly for women who have limited access to other forms of employment.

To ensure the success of such initiatives, the PKK has collaborated with the village-owned enterprises or *Badan Usaha Milik Desa* (BUMDes) to conduct workshops on critical business skills, including packaging and marketing. These workshops have empowered women by equipping them with the necessary tools to enhance the profitability of their businesses. By learning how to effectively package their products and market them through digital and social media platforms, the women have gained important skills that contribute to the sustainability and expansion of their ventures. Such efforts not only boost the local economy but also encourage women to take leadership roles in economic activities.

In addition to its economic activities, the PKK has made significant strides in improving the educational and health services available to the community. A central component of the PKK's work is the *Posyandu* program, which focuses on maternal and child health. This program provides an opportunity for women to receive education and guidance on various aspects of child health, including immunizations, early childhood development, and nutrition. The *Posyandu* program has proven to be an essential service in raising awareness about the importance of proper healthcare for children, ensuring that mothers are informed and equipped to make healthy decisions for their families. These programs have not only directly improved

public health in Pajambon Village but have also fostered greater community awareness of key health issues. The success of the *Posyandu* program and other PKK-led initiatives highlights the essential role women play in improving their communities, both by raising awareness about important health topics and by implementing practical solutions for better family welfare.

In summary, the PKK group in Pajambon Village plays a multifaceted role in the development of the village, from improving public health to promoting local businesses. Through their monthly meetings and initiatives, the PKK members have been able to address critical issues affecting the community, especially in health, sanitation, and economic empowerment. These programs have not only contributed to the well-being of individual families but have also fostered a sense of collective responsibility and solidarity within the village, reinforcing the importance of women's leadership in rural development.

Challenges Faced by Women in Village Development and Their Solutions

Women's involvement in rural development is critical for improving the welfare of communities, but in many settings, including Pajambon Village, such participation is constrained by prevailing traditional gender roles. Pajambon Village, a predominantly Muslim community, exhibits social norms that often restrict women to the domestic sphere, positioning their primary role as caregivers and homemakers. These traditional views can limit women's engagement in public life, including involvement in economic, political, and social development activities. Despite these cultural barriers, it is important to note that these societal perceptions are often rooted in misinterpretations of religious teachings. Islam, in its core tenets, does not prohibit women from engaging in professional, social, or community affairs, provided these activities align with ethical and religious guidelines (Yunita, 2023). Thus, the challenges faced by women in Pajambon are not intrinsic to religious doctrine but rather arise from entrenched social norms and misconceptions about gender roles.

The persistence of these gendered expectations in Pajambon creates significant barriers to women's full participation in community development. As evidenced in the present study, many women in the village express a desire to engage in public and economic activities, but their involvement often depends on the approval or encouragement of family members, particularly husbands. This reflects the dominant belief that women's primary responsibilities lie within the home and family care, rather than in the public or economic spheres. As a result, opportunities for women to engage in leadership roles or entrepreneurial ventures are often limited, despite the potential benefits their participation could bring to the broader community (Wula &

Anggraini, 2022).

To address these constraints and empower women to become active agents of development, a workshop titled *Keterlibatan Perempuan Desa* ("Women's Involvement in Village Development") was organized in Pajambon Village in February 2024. The objective of the workshop was to promote awareness regarding the importance of women's involvement in village development, provide insights into overcoming the social and cultural barriers to their participation, and explore the economic and social benefits of such involvement. The event was attended by 17 women which played a significant role in fostering women's engagement in social welfare activities, as depicted in Figure 2.

The workshop featured a lecture by an academic expert, who discussed the potential economic benefits of women's active participation in village development activities. The presentation highlighted how women's involvement in entrepreneurship, governance, and social services can stimulate local economic growth and enhance the well-being of families. The speaker also addressed strategies for overcoming the cultural and social barriers that restrict women's participation, including the need to challenge traditional gender roles and expand the scope of women's activities beyond domestic duties.



Figure 2. Workshop entitled *Keterlibatan Perempuan Desa*

Participant feedback indicated that the workshop was well-received, with 15 out of the 17 attendees reporting that they had gained valuable knowledge and insights. The majority of participants expressed that they had acquired a deeper understanding of the economic benefits associated with women's involvement in development, particularly in terms of how women's entrepreneurial activities can contribute to household income and community prosperity. Additionally, the workshop fostered an awareness of environmental sustainability in business practices, with attendees recognizing the importance of integrating environmental considerations into local economic activities. This underscores the broader significance of empowering women, not only for economic growth but also for the promotion of sustainable

development in rural areas.

The feedback also revealed that the workshop was instrumental in challenging entrenched gender norms and encouraging women to reconsider the limitations imposed by traditional roles. Participants expressed greater confidence in their ability to engage in community development and were motivated to pursue leadership and economic opportunities previously deemed inaccessible. This shift in mindset is a critical step in transforming the gender dynamics within Pajambon Village, where women's roles in development can be expanded beyond domestic responsibilities to include active participation in governance, economic activities, and social welfare programs.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by women in Pajambon Village are deeply intertwined with traditional gender norms that limit their engagement in public life and community development. However, as demonstrated by the *Keterlibatan Perempuan Desa* workshop, community-based educational initiatives can play a pivotal role in challenging these norms and empowering women to take on active roles in development. The positive outcomes from the workshop suggest that increasing awareness, providing practical skills, and fostering an environment of support can help women overcome cultural barriers and become more involved in shaping their communities' social, economic, and environmental futures. Such efforts are essential for achieving greater gender equality in rural development and for ensuring that women's contributions are recognized and fully integrated into the broader development process (Wula & Anggraini, 2022).

All things considered, while women in Pajambon Village continue to confront significant gender-based challenges, their contributions to both the economic and social fabric of the community are undeniable. The combination of female leadership in village governance, active involvement in community organizations, and participation in educational workshops has demonstrated the potential of gender equality to drive rural development. Women's empowerment in Pajambon Village provides a compelling example of how rural development initiatives can be more inclusive, sustainable, and effective when gender equity is prioritized. The experiences in Pajambon suggest that for rural Indonesia to achieve sustainable and inclusive development, it is essential to recognize and support the critical role that women play in shaping their communities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Women in Pajambon Village play a vital role in the community's development, contributing to the economy, education, healthcare, and village administration. Through women-led SMEs, particularly under the PKK, they have created a thriving micro-economy that boosts family incomes. Women also actively participate in education, healthcare, and social initiatives, with many serving as teachers, health workers, and community leaders. Despite challenges posed by traditional gender norms, ongoing programs, and workshops are empowering women to overcome barriers and contribute more to village development.

To further enhance women's participation, the local government should increase support for women's empowerment programs and extend these initiatives to neighboring villages. Regular workshops and seminars on gender equality, business development, and women's economic contributions should be organized to shift societal perceptions and build women's skills. Additionally, fostering collaboration between Pajambon and surrounding villages will strengthen the regional network of women entrepreneurs. Monitoring and evaluating these programs will ensure their continued success and sustainability.

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