

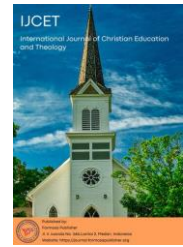


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The Role of Christian Education in Families, Schools, and Churches: Realizing Gender Equality in NTT

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality issues in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) face significant challenges due to a strong patriarchal culture. This research explores the role of Christian Religious Education in families, schools, and churches to support gender equality using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through unstructured interviews and indirect observations. The findings indicate that Christian Religious Education has substantial potential in shaping public views on gender equality by teaching values of mutual respect and shared responsibilities and encouraging women's active participation in church leadership. In conclusion, Christian Religious Education can contribute to creating a more equitable society.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) remains a significant challenge amidst the deeply rooted patriarchal culture in society. This culture creates structural injustices that negatively impact women and girls, as highlighted in the research by Nurul 'Afifah (2024). Muhammad Kholis Hamdy (2022) found that patriarchal norms contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence, which is a pervasive issue within the region. Data shows that in 2020, there were at least 31 reported cases of violence against women, with most violations committed by individuals who had close relationships with the victims (Kompas, "Violence Against Women in NTT is High," 2020). This underscores how deeply embedded patriarchal views can facilitate such violence and reinforce gender inequalities, leaving women and girls vulnerable to systemic abuse and discrimination.

The sphere of education is particularly affected by societal stigma, which exacerbates gender inequality. Gokma Toni Parlindungan S and Yohana Suganda (2023) reveal that entrenched social pressures often prevent women from pursuing higher education, resulting in financial dependency that significantly increases their vulnerability to domestic violence (DV). While existing literature outlines the detrimental impact of socio-economic factors on women's empowerment, there is a striking lack of research specifically focusing on how Christian Religious Education (CRE) can actively influence the transformation of gender norms within this local cultural context. The potential for CRE to serve as a transformative means of challenging oppressive models of gender roles remains underexplored.

Christian education, when implemented at home, in schools, and in churches, has the capacity to cultivate a cultural shift toward equity by instilling values such as mutual respect and shared responsibility. Research conducted by Anuli B. Okoli and Lawrence Okwuosa (2020) suggests that churches can serve as powerful agents of social change due to their influence within the community. It is crucial to note, however, that while many women are engaged in church activities, they continue to face significant barriers in rising to leadership positions, as described by Rev. Ina Bara Pa from GMIT. This disconnect highlights a critical need for further inquiry into how CRE can

intentionally create pathways for women's leadership and participation.

Moreover, the dynamics of the women's movement in NTT reveal notable collaboration between community organizations and individuals. For instance, research by Lewis and Hasan (2021) highlights how organizations like Solidaritas Perempuan (SP) Flobamoratas play a vital role in providing gender awareness education and empowering women to understand and advocate for their rights in both public and private spheres. However, the integration of SP's educational initiatives with Christian Religious Education practices remains under-researched. Understanding how these community-driven programs can complement and enhance CRE curricula could provide invaluable insights and frameworks for effectively addressing gender inequality.

Identifying innovative strategies that merge CRE with existing community efforts will not only broaden understanding but also create a united front in combatting deeply entrenched gender norms. Addressing the barriers to gender equality in NTT necessitates the implementation of Christian Religious Education across three pivotal domains—family, school, and church. Building collective awareness regarding women's rights and roles through this collaborative approach is essential. By establishing supportive networks that prioritize equality and empower both men and women, Christian Religious Education has the potential to facilitate a profound cultural shift. Such changes would signal the beginning of dismantling the patriarchal structures that have long hindered progress, ultimately aiming to foster a more just society where every individual has an equal opportunity to thrive.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to understand the role of Christian Education in realizing gender equality in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). This approach is based on social construction theory, which explains how societal views on gender are shaped through social and cultural interactions. The research is conducted in the South Central Timor Regency, with implementation occurring in August 2024. Data is collected through unstructured interviews with three

key informants: one educator, one women's activist, and one religious leader, who can provide valuable perspectives on the implementation of PAK in families, schools, and churches. Additionally, indirect observations are carried out to document interactions and social dynamics within educational environments and communication in churches and communities.

Once the data is collected, analysis is performed by identifying key themes that emerge from the interviews and observations, which are then linked to relevant literature to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in conveying gender equality values through PAK. The results of this analysis are expected to provide recommendations for optimizing PAK in the context of gender equality in NTT.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Christian Religious Education in Families in Realizing Gender Equality

In the context of families in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Christian Religious Education plays a crucial role in instilling sustainable values of gender equality. From a theological perspective, Christian Religious Education provides a foundational framework for teaching the fundamental principle that all humans are created equal before God, as articulated in various religious scriptures. This theological basis serves as a powerful motivator for families to cultivate a more balanced understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both men and women in their daily lives. By embedding these values into the family dynamic, parents are not only imparting religious teachings but also challenging traditional stereotypes and expectations that have long dictated gender roles within the community. Research conducted by Frastin Frastati et al. (2024) indicates that families actively implementing Christian Religious Education exhibit significantly higher levels of awareness regarding gender equality and demonstrate practices that reflect this understanding compared to those who do not engage with these educational principles. This increased awareness manifests in various ways, such as equitable task-

sharing within the household, encouragement of both boys and girls to pursue education, and fostering an environment where all family members' voices are valued and heard. The commitment to these teachings within the family unit helps to dismantle the restrictive norms imposed by patriarchal culture, paving the way for future generations to grow up in a society that recognizes and upholds the dignity and worth of every individual. Consequently, Christian Religious Education becomes not just a religious obligation but a transformative tool that equips families in NTT to work collaboratively towards achieving true gender equality, enhancing the well-being of their members, and contributing positively to the broader societal framework.

Interviews with educators and families involved in this study indicate that Christian Religious Education directly aids in teaching children about the importance of respecting differences and fair task sharing within the household. For instance, daily activities such as cooking and cleaning are no longer viewed as tasks exclusively for women but rather as shared responsibilities that should be undertaken with goodwill by all family members.

The through Christian Religious Education has proven to be highly effective in eroding traditional gender stereotypes that have historically placed women in subordinate roles within families and broader societal contexts. Research conducted by Marsha Miranda and Siti Rumilah (2024) indicates that this educational framework emphasizes core values, such as equality, respect, and mutual responsibility, which are pivotal in reshaping familial dynamics. In families that actively practice the principles inherent in Christian Religious Education, significant transformations occur regarding how boys and girls perceive their roles and contributions within the household; for instance, the long-standing belief that girls should be solely responsible for domestic tasks is being challenged as families foster a more inclusive understanding of gender roles. This shift empowers girls, enabling them to pursue educational

opportunities and participate in activities previously reserved for boys, which has a cascading effect on their self-esteem and aspirations. The UN Women report (2021) further corroborates this shift, highlighting the increased accessibility for women, particularly in rural areas of Indonesia, to engage in family decision-making processes, thus transforming them from passive participants to key decision-makers within their households. Moreover, the implementation of these equality principles positively influences boys, who learn to value and respect the contributions of their female peers and family members, thereby cultivating a generation that advocates for gender equality. These boys, raised in homes where equitable practices are modeled, grow to challenge traditional norms, fostering a collaborative spirit in daily tasks as activities like cooking, cleaning, and childcare are increasingly shared responsibilities, rather than assigned solely to women. Families are also noticing improvements in interpersonal relationships, where children, feeling more valued and secure, are encouraged to express their ideas and concerns, resulting in healthier dynamics characterized by open dialogue and mutual understanding. As this progressive educational approach proliferates, its implications extend beyond the family unit, contributing to a broader societal transformation that challenges ingrained patriarchal norms. Consequently, the integration of Christian Religious Education within families stands as a powerful vehicle for instilling values of gender equality from an early age, ultimately preparing a generation that is sensitive to gender issues and capable of challenging the structures that perpetuate inequality, thereby aligning with the aspirations for social renewal in East Nusa Tenggara and fostering a more just society where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive and realize their full potential.

In this study, several families reported significant changes in daily task sharing, reflecting a notable shift in perceptions of gender roles within the household. Boys, for instance, are now actively taught and encouraged to engage in household

chores, such as washing dishes and babysitting, which have traditionally been viewed as strictly women's work. This educational shift is crucial, as it not only broadens the understanding of what constitutes a family member's responsibilities but also dismantles the longstanding stereotypes that have confined these tasks to women and girls. According to Katherine Yovita et al. (2022), this transformative approach serves a dual purpose: it educates boys about responsibility, instilling in them an appreciation for the value of all contributions to the household, and it fosters an environment where girls feel more valued and equal in their home setting. By participating in a shared distribution of household tasks, boys learn essential life skills, such as cooperation, empathy, and respect for others' efforts, while girls benefit from seeing their contributions recognized and supported. This reciprocal reinforcement of equality lays the groundwork for healthier interpersonal dynamics and promotes a more equitable relationship among siblings. Ultimately, as families embrace these principles of shared responsibility, they not only cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect but also empower the next generation to challenge and redefine gender norms, contributing to a more balanced and inclusive societal framework.

The role of parents as role models in practicing the values of Christian Religious Education is a critical factor in promoting gender equality within the family unit and beyond. When parents exhibit fair and respectful sharing behaviors towards one another, children are likely to observe these interactions and adopt similar attitudes and behaviors in their own social relationships. This modeling of healthy dynamics is essential, as children often learn not only through direct teaching but also through the observation of their parents' actions and interactions. Consequently, when parents demonstrate a commitment to equality and respect in their relationships—whether through shared responsibilities in household chores, joint decision-making, or supportive communication—children internalize these values and are more inclined to practice them in their interactions with

peers and in future relationships. This phenomenon aligns with social learning theory as articulated by Albert Bandura (1977), which posits that individual attitudes and behaviors are significantly influenced by observing others, particularly those in authoritative roles such as parents. By embodying the principles of Christian Religious Education, parents create an environment where gender equality is normalized, thus empowering children to recognize the importance of respect and collaboration regardless of gender. As a result, this foundational learning not only shapes the immediate family dynamics but also has the potential to create a ripple effect throughout the community, leading to broader cultural shifts towards equitable practices and attitudes. Ultimately, the influence of parents acting as role models in this context consolidates the teachings of Christian Religious Education and serves as a powerful tool for fostering a generation that values and practices gender equality in all spheres of life.

Christian Religious Education within families transcends theoretical teaching, encompassing the practical application of fundamental values in daily life. It involves the intentional integration of teachings into family interactions, fostering an environment where spiritual and ethical principles guide behavior and decision-making. Many families have adopted practices such as regular prayer and discussions focused on gender issues, creating a safe space for all members to articulate their views and actively listen to one another's perspectives. This practice not only reinforces the teachings of Christian Religious Education but also cultivates a culture of respect and understanding that is essential for nurturing equality within the household. Research conducted by Sugiharto (2020) highlights that these discussions significantly promote open dialogue, encouraging family members to engage in conversations that may otherwise remain unaddressed. By addressing gender biases and misunderstandings head-on, families become more adept at navigating conflicts that may arise due to differing views on gender roles. This proactive approach not only improves cross-gender

understanding but also empowers individuals to express their thoughts and feelings openly, thereby reducing tensions and fostering a more harmonious family environment. The emphasis on dialogue also plays a critical role in developing empathy and encouraging a collective responsibility for promoting gender equality, reinforcing the notion that both men and women are integral partners in achieving harmony and balance within the family unit. Through these shared practices, families not only deepen their faith but also reinforce their commitment to building a home characterized by equity and cooperation, ultimately preparing younger generations to contribute positively to a more equitable society.

Ultimately, these findings illustrate that Christian Religious Education can be an effective tool in raising awareness of equality from an early age. By embedding these values in everyday contexts, Christian Religious Education helps prepare a younger generation that is more sensitive to gender equality and capable of challenging existing patriarchal norms, in line with broader aspirations for social renewal in NTT.

The Role of Christian Religious Education in Schools in Realizing Gender Equality

Christian Religious Education in schools plays an important role in promoting gender equality by providing students with a deep understanding of the fundamental values of justice and equality. Within the educational framework in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Christian Religious Education is integrated into the curriculum to teach students about the importance of equal rights and responsibilities, regardless of their gender. According to the Knowledge Sector Initiative's Research and Advocacy Partner Experience (2022), students who regularly participate in Christian Religious Education programs show increased awareness of social issues, including gender equality, compared to those who are not exposed to such programs.

The implementation of PAK in schools occurs not only through classroom teaching but also through various activities that place students in real

situations where they can practice the values being taught. Teachers in NTT report that Christian Religious Education is used as a platform to introduce discussions about gender roles and justice, encouraging students to think critically and reflectively about existing stereotypes (Robinson, 2020). This interactive teaching method helps students understand and interpret the concept of equality in the context of their everyday lives.

In addition to the formal curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on extracurricular activities related to Christian Religious Education that support gender equality. These programs, which include gender discussion groups, community service initiatives, and school debates, are often grounded in the values espoused by Christian Religious Education, which aim to promote understanding, tolerance, and collaboration between genders. Such initiatives create spaces for meaningful dialogue, allowing students to explore and challenge traditional gender roles while fostering a supportive community. A study by Wibowo (2021) highlights that women who actively participate in these extracurricular activities develop better leadership skills and exhibit more engaged participation in school events and decision-making processes. This enhanced skill set not only prepares them for roles within their educational institutions but also equips them with the confidence and experience needed to take on leadership positions outside of school, contributing to a broader movement for gender equality in society. Furthermore, active involvement in these programs encourages both boys and girls to practice empathy and collaboration, reinforcing the idea that leadership is not defined by gender, but by the ability to work with others towards common goals. By cultivating an inclusive environment that values the contributions of all members, these extracurricular activities play a vital role in dismantling stereotypes and building a more equitable foundation for future generations, whereby the principles of respect and equality are woven into the very fabric of their educational experience.

Christian plays a critical role in building self-esteem and independence among female students, significantly influencing their personal and academic development. Research conducted by Fernández and Heckman (2018) found that active involvement in Christian Religious Education classes strengthens positive gender identity while eroding traditional norms that have historically limited women's potential. This educational framework encourages female students in NTT to engage in open discussions, articulate their thoughts, and challenge preconceived notions about gender roles, fostering a supportive environment where they feel empowered to express their opinions freely. As a result, these young women increasingly view themselves as capable individuals entitled to pursue academic and career goals with confidence and equality. The principles of self-worth and independence instilled through Christian Religious Education enable students to recognize the value of their voices and contributions, motivating them to actively participate in classroom discussions and take on leadership roles in various activities. This newfound confidence not only enriches their academic experience but also prepares them to navigate societal challenges and expectations, ultimately inspiring them to become role models for their peers and future generations. By promoting a culture of empowerment, Christian Religious Education catalyzes a broader movement towards gender equity, allowing female students in NTT to thrive while contributing positively to their communities.

The teaching of Christian Religious Education often adopts a participatory approach, involving students in simulations and role-playing activities designed to explain gender roles and responsibilities equally. Drawing from Bandura's social learning theory (1977), this approach helps create a conducive environment for collaborative learning, where students learn from one another through positive interactions that emphasize mutual respect.

Beyond classroom learning, school policies reflecting equality values are also a significant focus within the Christian Religious Education

framework. As highlighted in research by Johnson and Kessler (2019), schools can serve as role models for the broader community by implementing equality policies across various aspects, including providing equal opportunities to participate in school activities and access learning resources.

Ultimately, Christian Religious Education in schools does not merely serve as an educational tool but also as a cultural change agent that guides students toward becoming individuals sensitive to equality and justice. With a comprehensive approach, Christian Religious Education is expected to shape a generation that is ready to address and challenge unjust social norms in the future, thereby realizing a more equitable and just community for all citizens.

The Christian Religious Education in Churches in Realizing Gender Equality

The church functions as a significant social institution with a substantial capacity to influence societal views on gender, especially within the community it serves. In this context, Christian Religious Education plays a pivotal role in instilling values of gender equality among its congregation by providing education that emphasizes the inherent worth of all individuals, regardless of gender. Through well-designed educational programs, churches are beginning to challenge and change traditional perspectives that often delineate roles based on gender, promoting a more inclusive understanding of participation within both the church and the broader community. Research conducted by McCarty and Lopes (2018) indicates that when Christian Religious Education actively focuses on themes of gender equality, it can significantly enhance women's participation in church leadership. This empowerment opens up important avenues for women to contribute meaningfully to ministry and congregational activities, thereby fostering a more equitable environment where diverse voices are acknowledged and valued. As churches implement these educational strategies, they not only encourage active involvement from women but also

inspire a shift in the attitudes of male congregation members, fostering an environment of respect and collaboration between genders. This transformative potential of Christian Religious Education within the church serves as a catalyst for broader societal change, helping to establish gender equality as a fundamental value ingrained in the fabric of community life. By promoting inclusive practices and providing platforms for women to lead and engage in meaningful dialogue, churches can significantly contribute to dismantling long-standing patriarchal norms and cultivating a culture of equality that resonates beyond their walls, ultimately playing a crucial role in shaping a more just and equitable society.

For example, seminars and educational programs within churches frequently emphasize the important roles of women in various ministries, thereby challenging traditional notions of gender roles and promoting greater inclusivity. This focus aligns with findings from research conducted by Dewi and Masri (2020), which reveals that skills training and entrepreneurship programs organized by churches significantly boost women's confidence and enhance their capacity to manage church activities effectively. By equipping women with practical skills and knowledge, these initiatives empower them to take on leadership roles and actively participate in decision-making processes within the church. Such empowerment is crucial, as it enables women to contribute their perspectives and insights, fostering a more balanced approach to ministry that benefits the entire congregation. Rev. Ina Bara Pa, a prominent church leader within GMIT, emphasizes that providing space for women in leadership not only recognizes their contributions but also strengthens the core spiritual teachings that promote values of equality. By actively promoting women's involvement in leadership and ministry roles, churches align their practices with their theological commitments to justice and equity, thereby setting a powerful example for the wider community. The initiative of integrating women into various ministries reinforces the message that gender equality is not merely an ideal but a tangible

reality that can be achieved within the church's operations. As churches continue to foster such environments, they contribute significantly to the transformation of societal attitudes toward gender, influencing congregants to embrace and practice the values of inclusivity and respect in their daily lives, ultimately advancing the broader goal of gender equality within and beyond the church community.

Despite the significant progress made towards achieving gender equality within the church, numerous challenges persist that hinder this important goal. Many members of church communities continue to uphold traditional views that cast doubt on women's capabilities to lead effectively. These perceptions are often deeply rooted in longstanding cultural and religious norms that reinforce male dominance and female subordination, leading to an environment where women's contributions are undervalued or overlooked. Research conducted by Haffner and Lee (2019) highlights the urgent need for ongoing educational efforts aimed at changing these entrenched mindsets, particularly among senior leaders and influential members of the congregation. Without targeted intervention, these traditional beliefs can perpetuate gender inequality, stifling the potential for women to assume leadership roles within the church and undermining the principles of inclusivity and equality that many religious teachings espouse. To address this issue, approaches that emphasize dialogue and the sharing of experiences are highly recommended. Facilitating open conversations where both men and women can discuss their views on gender roles and leadership can promote greater understanding and empathy among church members. These dialogues could include workshops, seminars, and small group discussions that allow participants to explore the theological basis for gender equality and share personal stories that reflect the positive impact of inclusive practices. By creating a space for candid discussion, church communities can begin to shift perspectives and cultivate an environment where women's leadership is recognized and valued. Ultimately, fostering a culture of dialogue not only

transforms individual beliefs but also reinforces the church's commitment to embodying values of equity and justice for all members, paving the way for a more inclusive future where everyone has the opportunity to lead and contribute meaningfully to the community.

The church also plays a vital role in supporting social activities focused on women. Many Christian Religious Education programs in NTT are designed not only to equip women with theological knowledge but also with practical skills that can enhance their well-being. For instance, programs that provide skills training and support for small enterprises are often organized by the church, offering women opportunities to contribute economically while strengthening their positions within the community. Research by Wibowo (2021) found that the presence of such programs has helped increase women's financial independence, positively impacting power dynamics in households.

In a broader context, Christian Religious Education within the church can serve as a powerful model for social change in society by promoting fundamental values of equality and justice. By actively teaching these principles, the church has the potential to create more inclusive and equitable communities where all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to engage and participate. This approach is particularly impactful in regions like East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), where patriarchal norms often dominate societal structures and influence cultural attitudes. The church's focus on equality as a divine mandate helps to challenge and dismantle these restrictive norms, encouraging congregants to embrace the idea that gender equality is not merely an abstract concept but a necessity deeply rooted in their religious teachings. This awareness serves as a catalyst for many church members, motivating them to take proactive steps toward achieving gender equality within their families, congregations, and communities. Through community outreach, educational programs, and workshops that emphasize the importance of equal participation, church members are empowered to advocate for equitable practices and challenge

discriminatory attitudes. Such initiatives can lead to significant social change, as the church becomes a forum for instilling values that promote understanding, respect, and collaboration among all individuals. By fostering a culture that prioritizes equity, the church not only enhances its internal dynamics but also impacts the broader societal landscape, creating ripple effects that redefine roles, responsibilities, and opportunities available to both men and women. Ultimately, the church's commitment to instilling values of equality through Christian Religious Education positions it as a crucial player in the movement for social transformation, paving the way toward a more just and equitable society in NTT and beyond.

Thus, it can be concluded that Christian Religious Education in the church significantly contributes to raising awareness of the importance of gender equality. By involving women in leadership, supporting education, and promoting constructive dialogue, the church not only fulfills its spiritual responsibilities but also serves as an agent of change that supports social justice. With progressive steps taken by the church and religious leaders, Christian Religious Education becomes an effective means of realizing gender equality. Churches actively advocating for equality values will not only improve the quality of life for their congregants but also exert a positive influence on the surrounding social order.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Christian Education plays a pivotal role in fostering gender equality in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) by integrating values of justice and equality across various domains: the family, schools, and the church. Within families, Christian Religious Education promotes shared responsibilities and challenges traditional gender roles, leading to increased appreciation of both male and female contributions. In educational settings, it enhances awareness of social issues and encourages active participation in gender discussions, empowering students, especially girls, to pursue their aspirations confidently. Meanwhile, in

churches, Christian Religious Education serves as a catalyst for cultural transformation, increasing women's involvement in leadership and community activities while advocating for social justice. By involving both genders in meaningful discussions and practical initiatives, Christian Religious Education not only educates but also cultivates a more inclusive and equitable society, making significant strides toward dismantling patriarchal norms and advancing gender equality in NTT.

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