

## **Between Obedience and Survival: Gender Norms, Economic Dependence, and Violence Against Women in Rural Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Indonesia remains a critical structural problem, with one in four women aged 15–64 having experienced violence in their lifetime (SPHPN, 2024). The intersection of patriarchal norms, economic dependence, and double burden of domestic and productive work creates layered vulnerabilities that conventional intervention approaches have inadequately addressed. This study explored women's lived experiences of gender norms and violence using a mixed methods phenomenological approach, drawing on qualitative data from in-depth interviews (IDI), focus group discussions (FGD), and Oral Her Story (OHS) narratives collected from 126 informants, as well as supporting quantitative survey data from 300 respondents (100 per site), across three Indonesian regencies: Cirebon (West Java), Jember (East Java), and Lombok Timur (West Nusa Tenggara). Findings from the BERANI II Baseline Study (UN Women, 2025) revealed that patriarchal norms strongly position men as primary breadwinners, whilst simultaneously subjecting women to a double burden of productive and reproductive labour. Economic violence was the most prevalent form of GBV (32.1%), and women who were entirely financially dependent on their spouses faced significantly higher rates of lifetime violence (54.3%). Critically, economic participation alone was insufficient to protect women from violence; employed women encountered new forms of abuse, including social stigma and emotional violence. These findings suggest that sustainable GBV prevention requires simultaneous transformation of gender norms alongside economic empowerment interventions, with meaningful inclusion of men as partners of change.

**Keywords:** gender-based violence, gender norms, economic dependence, women empowerment, phenomenology

### **Introduction**

Gender-based violence (GBV) constitutes one of the most pervasive and systematically entrenched human rights violations globally. According to the World Health Organization (2021), approximately 736 million women, almost one in three, have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. In Indonesia, national data from the Survey Pengalaman Hidup Perempuan Nasional (SPHPN, 2024) estimated that one in four women aged 15–64 had experienced gender-based

violence during their lifetime. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA, 2024) further documented 12,576 cases of violence in 2024 alone, with women comprising the overwhelming majority of victims (10,919 persons). The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan, 2024) recorded an even more alarming total of 289,111 cases of violence against women in 2023, underscoring the gravity of this ongoing crisis.

The persistence of GBV in Indonesia cannot be attributed merely to individual behaviours or

isolated incidents. Rather, it is best understood as the product of deeply embedded social structures, patriarchal cultural values, intergenerational gender socialisation, and systemic economic marginalization, that collectively normalise the subordination of women (Laksono et al., 2023; Cookson et al., 2023). In rural and semi-urban areas, where traditional norms remain particularly entrenched and institutional support services are limited, women face compounded vulnerabilities. As Wulandari and Wulan et al. (2024) noted, Indonesian women continue to bear disproportionate burdens of unpaid domestic and care labour, which significantly constrains their economic independence and amplifies their exposure to violence.

GBV therefore is not merely an interpersonal problem; it is a structural phenomenon reproduced through cultural scripts, religious interpretations, and socioeconomic conditions that position women as subordinate members of the household. Understanding GBV through this structural lens is essential for developing interventions capable of addressing its root causes rather than merely its symptoms.

Existing scholarship on GBV in Indonesia has predominantly focused on legal and institutional responses (Kumari, 2025; WHO, 2024) or on prevalence estimates derived from large-scale quantitative surveys (Laksono et al., 2023; SPHPN, 2024). Comparatively little attention has been directed toward understanding how women themselves experience, make sense of, and navigate gendered violence within the specific social, cultural, and economic contexts of their daily lives. Furthermore, the complex triangular relationship between gender norms, economic dependence, and GBV has rarely been examined together in a unified analytical framework within the Indonesian rural context.

Existing studies have also tended to treat rural and semi-urban communities in Indonesia as a monolithic category, obscuring significant intra-regional variation in cultural practices, economic conditions, and patriarchal configurations. Communities in West Java, East Java, and West Nusa Tenggara, for instance, differ considerably in their adat traditions, religious orientations, and labour market structures, differences that critically shape the nature and dynamics of GBV.

This study addresses these gaps by applying a phenomenological lens to understand the lived experiences of women across three distinct rural regencies in Indonesia.

This article pursues two interrelated objectives. First, it aims to explore how prevailing gender norms shape women's experiences of and responses to gender-based violence in rural Indonesian communities. Second, it examines how economic dependence functions as a structural risk factor that deepens women's vulnerability to GBV, while simultaneously complicating their pathways out of violent situations. Beyond documenting these dynamics, the study seeks to illuminate how women actively navigate, resist, and survive within constrained structural conditions.

The contribution of this article is threefold. Theoretically, it enriches phenomenological scholarship on GBV by providing empirically grounded accounts of women's lived realities in Southeast Asian rural contexts. Empirically, it offers triangulated evidence, combining qualitative narratives with supporting quantitative data, from three culturally distinct Indonesian communities. Practically, it advances the argument that economic empowerment programmes must be integrated with gender-transformative approaches to achieve sustainable reductions in GBV.

Patriarchy, as a system of social relations structured around male dominance and female subordination, has been extensively theorised as a foundational driver of gender inequality and violence against women (Connell, 2021; Jayaratne & Wijewardena, 2025). Within patriarchal systems, gender norms function as shared prescriptions that define acceptable roles, behaviours, and relationships for men and women. These norms are not static; they are actively reproduced through family socialisation, religious discourse, cultural practices, and institutional structures, and they vary across cultural contexts while maintaining their core function of legitimating asymmetrical power arrangements (Cookson et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian context, patriarchal norms have been shaped by the confluence of adat (customary law) traditions, Islamic jurisprudence, and colonial legacies. The dominant ideological script positions the

husband as kepala keluarga (head of household) and primary breadwinner, while the wife is expected to fulfil roles of ibu rumah tangga (homemaker) and primary caregiver. This ideological configuration has been documented across diverse regions of Indonesia (Social Norms and Women's Economic Participation Report, Lembaga Demografi UI, 2023), with women consistently reporting that their identity and social worth are primarily evaluated through their performance of domestic and reproductive duties.

Gender norms are not merely descriptive; they are also normative and prescriptive. They define not only what women do but what they are expected to want and to endure. As Qiu (2023) noted in her analysis of patriarchal socialisation, women often internalise these norms and reproduce them, making the deconstruction of gender hierarchy a complex process that requires transformation at both structural and individual levels.

A substantial body of international literature has established economic dependence as one of the most significant risk factors for intimate partner violence (IPV) and GBV more broadly (Steinert et al., 2022; Liu & Olamijuwon, 2024). Marital dependency theory posits that women who lack independent financial resources are less able to leave abusive relationships due to their material reliance on their abusers (Mellar et al., 2024). Conversely, resource theory suggests that women's economic participation may paradoxically provoke male partners to reassert dominance through violence when traditional breadwinner roles are perceived to be threatened (Steinert et al., 2022).

In low- and middle-income country (LMIC) settings, this paradox manifests with particular force. Gunarathne et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review of GBV in LMICs and found that while women's economic participation generally reduces GBV over time, the transition period, during which women begin to earn income and challenge traditional power arrangements, is frequently associated with elevated violence. This "backlash effect" is especially pronounced in highly patriarchal societies where male breadwinner status is closely tied to masculine identity.

In Indonesia specifically, Laksono et al. (2023) demonstrated through nationally representative data that poverty and economic marginalisation significantly increase women's risk of intimate partner violence. Crucially, the authors identified that the relationship between economic factors and GBV is not linear; it is mediated by household power dynamics, spousal attitudes toward gender roles, and community-level tolerance of violence. Singh et al. (2022) similarly found that financial dependence on a male partner was robustly associated with higher IPV prevalence across diverse cultural contexts.

Violence against women in Indonesia has been extensively documented as embedded within cultural and religious frameworks that normalise male authority and female subordination (Causes and Impacts of Domestic Violence Against Women, 2024; KemenPPPA, 2024). Research has shown that significant proportions of Indonesian women, as well as men, hold attitudes that justify wife-beating under certain circumstances, including when wives fail to perform domestic duties satisfactorily or disobey their husbands (Equal Measures, 2025). These attitudes reflect the internalisation of patriarchal norms that frame violence as a legitimate instrument of discipline rather than a violation of rights.

The influence of Islamic religious values on gender norms in Indonesia is complex and contextual. While egalitarian interpretations of Islamic teaching emphasise mutual respect and equitable partnership in marriage, conservative religious discourse has frequently been mobilised to reinforce notions of male authority (qiwama) and female obedience (qanutat). In rural communities, religious leaders, as respected community authorities, play a significant role in either perpetuating or challenging these patriarchal framings (Rinaldo et al., 2024).

Moreover, the normalisation of economic violence, including controlling women's access to financial resources, restricting their employment, and appropriating their earnings, has received comparatively less scholarly attention than physical or sexual violence in the Indonesian context. Yet as this study will demonstrate, economic violence functions as a foundational mechanism through which patriarchal power is exercised and sustained in households.

This study draws on phenomenological methodology to bridge the gap between structural analyses of GBV and the subjective dimensions of women's lived experiences in rural Indonesia. By examining the intersection of gender norms, economic dependence, and GBV simultaneously across three regencies with distinct socio-cultural characteristics, this research offers a more contextually nuanced account than single-site studies or aggregate national surveys. Furthermore, by centering women's own voices and meaning-making processes, the study contributes a perspective that quantitative approaches cannot fully capture, one that reveals not only the mechanisms through which violence occurs, but the ways in which women navigate, resist, and survive within highly constrained structural conditions.

## Method

This study employed a mixed methods research design with a phenomenological approach as its primary qualitative strand, following the tradition established by Moustakas (1994) and elaborated by Creswell and Poth (2018). Quantitative survey data were used as a secondary strand to contextualise and triangulate qualitative findings. Phenomenology is concerned with exploring the structure and essence of human experience, seeking to understand how individuals perceive, interpret, and ascribe meaning to phenomena in their lived worlds. This approach was chosen because GBV is not merely a behavioural or clinical phenomenon; it is fundamentally an experiential reality that is shaped by, and in turn shapes, women's subjectivity, identity, and agency. Phenomenological inquiry enabled the research team to move beyond epidemiological accounts of GBV prevalence to access the textured, context-sensitive dimensions of women's experiences.

Consistent with phenomenological principles, the study did not seek to generalise findings to a broader population. Instead, it aimed to develop a deep, interpretively rich understanding of the essential structures of women's experiences of gender norms and violence in specific community contexts. The researchers engaged in reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process, acknowledging that their own

positionalities could influence interpretive processes.

Data were collected across three regencies selected for the BERANI II Baseline Study (UN Women, 2025): Cirebon Regency (West Java), Jember Regency (East Java), and Lombok Timur Regency (West Nusa Tenggara). These sites were purposively selected to capture variation in socio-cultural contexts, poverty levels, and gender dynamics. Cirebon is characterised by a Sundanese cultural context with relatively higher female labour force participation (53% of female respondents were employed). Jember reflects a Javanese-Madurese cultural mosaic with significant labour migration dynamics. Lombok Timur is characterised by the Sasak ethnic group, a high prevalence of the Merarik (elopement) marriage tradition, and the highest poverty rate among the three sites (46.53% of respondents in the vulnerable wealth category).

Each site presents distinct configurations of patriarchal culture, religious influence, and economic structure, making multi-site comparison analytically valuable for identifying both shared structural patterns and context-specific dynamics of GBV.

Qualitative data were drawn from three methods: in-depth interviews (IDI), focus group discussions (FGD), and Oral Her Story (OHS) narratives. IDIs were conducted with three categories of informants: women survivors of gender-based violence, adult men from the general population, and community and religious leaders. Women survivors were identified through local non-governmental organisations using systematic random sampling from survivor registries, minimising selection bias. FGDs were conducted in gender-segregated groups, separate sessions for women and for men, to facilitate candid discussion of sensitive topics. OHS narratives were collected from two women whose cases presented particularly illuminating dimensions of the intersection between gender norms, economic dependence, and violence.

In total, the qualitative component involved 126 primary informants, supplemented by 11 additional informants (5 husband informants and 6 village leader informants) added during fieldwork to enrich data coverage. All qualitative fieldwork was conducted by trained qualitative

researchers using a trauma-informed approach. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and identity confidentiality was rigorously maintained throughout the research process. Supporting quantitative data from a survey of 300 respondents (100 per site) were used for triangulation purposes, enriching the contextual interpretation of qualitative findings.

Qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis, following the six-step framework of Braun and Clarke (2022). This involved familiarisation with data through repeated reading of transcripts; generation of initial codes; searching for, reviewing, and defining themes; and producing a thematic map that connected individual narratives to broader structural patterns. Triangulation was employed systematically by comparing qualitative themes with quantitative survey data to assess convergence and divergence, thereby strengthening the credibility of interpretations. Member checking was conducted where possible to validate emerging analytical categories with informants. The analysis maintained reflexivity through team discussion of interpretive decisions and attention to positionality.

## Results and Discussion

### Socio-economic Profile of Women and Structural Vulnerability

The socio-economic profile of women in the three research sites reflected conditions of significant structural disadvantage. The majority of respondents across all three regencies belonged to the vulnerable and aspiring economic classes as defined by World Bank categorisation: in Cirebon, 44.55% of respondents were from the aspiring class; in Jember and Lombok Timur, the majority (46% and 46.53% respectively) fell within the vulnerable class. Middle-class respondents were minimal across all sites, comprising only 1.98% in Cirebon and effectively absent in Jember and Lombok Timur.

Educational attainment was notably low across the sample. More than 70% of respondents held a junior high school diploma or lower, a pattern partly attributable to the high proportion of adolescent respondents but also reflective of broader structural barriers to girls' educational access in rural Indonesia. Women's higher education attainment (5%) marginally exceeded

men's (2%), yet remained low in absolute terms. In Lombok Timur, 7% of female respondents held a diploma or bachelor's degree, the highest proportion among the three sites.

Employment patterns were gendered and site-specific. In Cirebon, 53% of female respondents were employed, representing the highest female employment rate among the three sites. In Jember and Lombok Timur, female employment rates were substantially lower at 44% and 34% respectively, whilst male employment rates exceeded 60% in both sites. This employment gap reflects the operation of gendered labour market norms that restrict women's economic participation even as household economic necessity creates pressures for women to contribute financially.

These socio-economic characteristics, low education, economic vulnerability, and restricted employment, constitute the structural conditions within which gender norms and GBV operate. As Laksono et al. (2023) demonstrated, poverty and economic marginalisation function as structural amplifiers of GBV risk, limiting women's capacity to resist violence or to exit violent relationships. The profile of women in this study is consistent with this framework: their economic vulnerability intersects with patriarchal gender norms to produce compounded and mutually reinforcing forms of disadvantage.

### Gender Norms and the Double Burden: "The Wife Cannot Be the Backbone"

One of the most striking findings of this study was the pervasiveness and cross-gender endorsement of the norm that women should not serve as primary breadwinners. Quantitative survey data revealed that majorities of both male and female respondents disagreed with the statement that "the wife can be the main breadwinner": in Jember, 80% of men and 78% of women disagreed; in Cirebon, 76% of men and 55% of women disagreed; in Lombok Timur, 64% of men and 55% of women disagreed. These findings are striking not only for the magnitude of disagreement but for the fact that women themselves, in many sites, were equally or more likely than men to reject women's breadwinner role.

This pattern reflects the depth of internalisation of patriarchal gender norms. As

qualitative data elaborated, the norm is not experienced merely as external social pressure but as a deeply held conviction about the natural order of family life, a conviction reinforced by cultural values, religious discourse, and intergenerational socialisation.

*"How can women work? Women are supposed to be the rib, not the backbone. They should be taking care of the family. In my opinion, women don't have to work. But if it really can't be avoided, then fine, better than arguing about it. — Man, Jember"*

This metaphor, woman as rib, not backbone, is revealing. It acknowledges women's necessary presence and supporting function whilst firmly subordinating that function to male structural authority. Even among female respondents, there was substantial adherence to this framework:

*"No [if women become the main breadwinners]. If the husband is paralysed, then it's okay. — Woman, Jember"*

The qualification embedded in this response, women may work only under conditions of male incapacitation, illustrates how the normative prohibition on female breadwinning persists even among those who might logically benefit from its relaxation. Cookson et al. (2023) documented similar dynamics in their global review of social norms and gender, noting that women's own endorsement of restrictive gender norms frequently functions as a mechanism of norm perpetuation rather than norm contestation.

The gendered division of labour was further illuminated by time use analysis. Women performed domestic and caregiving work three times longer than men across all three sites. The disparity was most pronounced in Cirebon, where women spent four times as long on domestic tasks as men; in Lombok Timur, women spent three times as long; and in Jember, approximately 2.5 times longer. When total unpaid labour is accounted for alongside paid employment, women in Cirebon worked 2.81 more hours per day than men, and women in Jember worked 23.71% of their day in unpaid domestic activities compared to 9.51% for men. This constitutes a classic double burden: women are not merely expected to contribute to household income but to do so whilst retaining full responsibility for domestic and care work.

The double burden has profound implications for GBV. As this study will demonstrate in the following section, the persistence of domestic work as exclusively women's domain generates points of conflict within households that can escalate into violence. Furthermore, it constrains women's time, energy, and psychological resources, limiting their capacity to pursue economic independence or to access support services.

Women in all three research sites articulated a distinctive framing of their work that is analytically significant: their economic participation was almost universally described not as a pathway to personal autonomy but as an extension of domestic obligation, a form of support for their husbands, an act of worship (ibadah), or a necessity for children's education. This framing is consistent with the findings of Lembaga Demografi UI (2023), which documented that Indonesian women tend to position their labour market participation within a relational framework of family support rather than individual empowerment.

*"I work not to earn money for myself, but to help my husband so that the household needs are met. — Woman, Cirebon"*

*"If I help my husband earn a living, it's part of worship. The important thing is that the family remains harmonious and the children are taken care of. — Woman, Lombok Timur"*

These narratives, whilst reflecting women's genuine values and commitments, also reveal the degree to which gender norms constrain the imaginative horizon of women's economic agency. When work is framed primarily as service to family rather than as a right or a source of personal fulfilment, it becomes difficult to mobilise economically derived resources as leverage against violent partners.

### **Gender-Based Violence: From Normalisation to Survival Strategy**

Quantitative findings established that 43.4% of female respondents (46 out of 106 women surveyed) had experienced at least one form of GBV during their lifetime: economic, emotional, or physical violence. By registry, 48.5% of women in Cirebon, 41.7% in Jember, and 40.6% in Lombok Timur reported lifetime GBV exposure. The most prevalent form of violence across the

entire sample was economic violence (32.1%), followed by emotional violence (20.8%) and physical violence (10.4%). In Cirebon, emotional violence was particularly prevalent (33.3%), whilst in Jember and Lombok Timur, economic violence predominated (36.1% and 37.8% respectively).

These patterns are consistent with broader literature. Gunarathne et al. (2023) identified economic violence as a frequently underreported and underrecognised form of GBV in LMICs, noting that its prevalence is often masked by exclusive scholarly and institutional focus on physical and sexual violence. In Indonesia, the Law on Elimination of Household Violence (Law No. 23 of 2004) formally recognises economic neglect as a form of domestic violence, yet enforcement and awareness remain limited, particularly in rural areas.

### The Normalisation of Violence

A striking feature of qualitative narratives across all three sites was the pervasive normalisation of domestic violence as a legitimate mechanism of marital discipline. Community leaders and ordinary respondents alike articulated a framework in which husbands' disciplinary authority over their wives, including the use of physical correction, was accepted as part of the natural order of family life.

*"If the husband gets angry and hits, it's because the wife is wrong. If you don't want to be hit, the wife must be able to behave. — Woman, Cirebon"*

*"My parents used to be like this too, if the wife was wrong, the husband would reprimand her harshly. I think that's how the household works. — Village Leader, Lombok Timur"*

These narratives illustrate the intergenerational transmission of violence normalisation documented in the broader GBV literature. Rikhotso et al. (2023) observed similar dynamics in South Africa, where qualitative research revealed that women survivors frequently attributed violence to their own behaviour and accepted it as a normative feature of marriage. In the Indonesian context, this normalisation is reinforced by community pressures for privacy around domestic matters, which effectively silence women's experiences of violence.

*"In my village, if a woman is beaten by her husband, people say it's a domestic matter, not someone else's business. They say, "The wife must obey, otherwise it's normal to be scolded or punished." So, many women don't dare to tell, for fear of being considered a bad wife. — Community Leader, Cirebon"*

Non-disclosure of violence is a well-documented phenomenon in the literature. WHO (2021) estimated that fewer than 40% of women who experience violence globally seek any form of help. In Indonesia, the disparity between prevalence and formal reporting is particularly stark: whilst over 6.6% of women reported experiencing violence within the past year in 2021 (Adaptation of the RESPECT Framework, 2024), only 7,435 cases were reported to police (Equal Measures, 2025). Qualitative findings from this study illuminate the normative and social mechanisms that sustain this silence.

### Economic Dependence and the Paradox of Survival

Quantitative data from this study revealed a particularly important finding: women who depended entirely on their spouse for personal financial needs experienced the highest lifetime GBV exposure (54.3%), more than 21 percentage points higher than women with their own sources of income (33.3%). This finding corroborates the broader literature on economic dependence and GBV risk (Mellar et al., 2024; Liu & Olamijuwon, 2024) and underscores the structural dimension of violence risk in these communities.

Yet the relationship between economic activity and GBV protection was far from straightforward. Working women in this study experienced GBV at rates nearly equivalent to non-working women: 44.4% of employed women had experienced lifetime GBV, compared to 41.9% of non-employed women. This finding is analytically significant: it challenges simplistic assumptions that economic participation alone constitutes a sufficient protective factor against GBV.

Qualitative data elaborated on the mechanisms behind this paradox. Women in the study reported entering the labour market not as a free exercise of economic agency but as a survival strategy in response to ongoing economic violence, specifically, when their

partners ceased providing for household needs or appropriated their earnings.

*"I used to not work, all the money was held by my husband. But after a while he stopped giving me money, he said I should be able to manage my own money, even though there was never enough money. Finally, I started selling small things to buy the children's needs. — Woman, Cirebon"*

This narrative illustrates the logic of women's economic participation under conditions of economic violence: it is not an expression of aspiration but a response to deprivation. This survival-oriented form of economic agency is qualitatively different from empowerment, it is undertaken within, not in opposition to, an abusive relational context.

Furthermore, women who began working often found themselves facing new forms of violence. In Lombok Timur, women who worked outside the home, particularly if their work required returning home late or frequent interactions with others, were subjected to social stigma and used this as a pretext by their partners for emotional or physical violence.

*"I'm tired of working all day, but when I come home, my husband still gets angry if I haven't cooked or the house isn't tidy. He says I'm still his wife, so it's my job. If he earns the money, he can rest at home. For me, I have to do both. — Woman, Lombok Timur"*

This testimony encapsulates the double burden of employed women and its relationship to GBV. Economic participation does not release women from domestic obligations; it adds a productive layer of responsibility without redistributing the reproductive one. The persistence of domestic responsibility, and the attendant risk of violence when domestic standards are perceived to have been neglected, means that women's economic activity creates new friction rather than simply reducing existing vulnerability.

A particularly insidious dimension of economic violence identified in this study was the retention of control over women's earnings by their partners. Many women who were employed found that their income was either appropriated by their husbands or so tightly controlled that they effectively retained no financial autonomy. This pattern, working without controlling one's earnings, is a form of economic violence that is

paradoxically enabled by women's labour force participation and reflects the operation of patriarchal power within households, as documented in broader literature (Steinert et al., 2022; Align Platform, 2024).

### **Barriers to Disclosure and Help-Seeking**

Across all three research sites, women identified multiple and interconnected barriers to disclosing violence or seeking formal help. These included fear of social stigma (being labelled a "bad wife"), normalisation of violence as a private domestic matter, economic dependence that made separation materially impossible, and lack of awareness about available support services. Community-level social norms that privatise domestic affairs and position female silence as virtuous were particularly powerful barriers to help-seeking.

These findings are consistent with the broader literature on IPV disclosure in LMIC settings. As the UNDP (2024) noted, GBV survivors in Indonesia face significant barriers to accessing services, with most ending up in silence. Awareness and accessibility of services, including the SAPA 129 helpline and UPTD PPA centres, remain highly uneven, particularly in rural areas. Structural investment in accessible, community-based support services is therefore a necessary, if insufficient, complement to normative change strategies.

### **Conclusions**

This study has demonstrated, through a mixed methods approach combining phenomenological qualitative inquiry with supporting quantitative survey data, that gender-based violence in rural Indonesia is not an aberration from normal social life but an extension of normative gender arrangements. Patriarchal norms that position men as primary breadwinners and women as domestic caregivers are deeply internalised by both men and women and are reproduced across generations through family socialisation, religious discourse, and community practice. These norms construct domestic violence as a legitimate mechanism of marital discipline, generate a double burden for employed women, and render economic dependence a powerful structural risk factor for GBV. Critically, this study found that economic

participation alone is insufficient to protect women from violence and may, under conditions of persisting patriarchal norms, generate new forms of abuse. Women who entered the labour market did so primarily as survival strategies in response to economic violence rather than as autonomous expressions of economic agency. Their continued responsibility for domestic work, combined with partners' control over their earnings, meant that employment did not translate into substantive economic empowerment or reduced vulnerability to violence. Regional variation was also evident: Cirebon presented the highest rates of emotional violence and women's double burden; Jember showed the strongest resistance to female breadwinner norms; and Lombok Timur was characterised by economic violence as the predominant form of GBV and cultural practices, such as *Merarik*, that intersect with gender dynamics in distinctive ways. These variations underscore the importance of contextually sensitive programme design that attends to the specific cultural configurations of patriarchy in different communities.

The findings of this study generate several important implications for GBV prevention programming and policy in Indonesia. First, economic empowerment interventions must be integrated with gender socialisation components. As this study has demonstrated, economic participation without normative change does not reduce violence and may increase women's exposure to new forms of abuse. Interventions modelled on approaches such as that documented by OlaOlorun and John (2021) in Nigeria, combining financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, and gender norm reflection, show promise in addressing both the economic and normative dimensions of GBV simultaneously. Second, interventions must actively and meaningfully include men and boys as partners of change. Normative transformation cannot be achieved by working with women in isolation from the men who are primary actors in perpetuating gender-based violence. Male engagement must move beyond tokenistic inclusion to substantive transformation of men's attitudes, practices, and identities as partners, fathers, and community members. Third, community-based programme design with

trusted local facilitators is likely to be more effective and sustainable than externally imposed interventions. Religious leaders, village heads, and community cadres are powerful agents of social norm reproduction; engaging them as allies in normative transformation, rather than bypassing or ignoring them, is essential for creating community environments that are genuinely less tolerant of GBV. Fourth, services for GBV survivors must be made more accessible, particularly in rural areas. The current gap between GBV prevalence and formal reporting in Indonesia is unacceptably large and reflects systemic failures of service provision, awareness, and survivor trust in formal institutions. Community-based services, trauma-informed support, and integration of GBV services with broader health and social protection systems are urgently needed.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The mixed methods design, whilst enabling triangulation between qualitative and quantitative strands, relied on a phenomenological qualitative strand as the primary analytical lens, which limits statistical generalisability. The purposive selection of research sites means findings reflect the specific conditions of Cirebon, Jember, and Lombok Timur and should not be extrapolated uncritically to other regions of Indonesia or to Southeast Asia more broadly. The study's cross-sectional design also precludes causal inference about the relationship between economic dependence and GBV, or about change over time. Reliance on self-reported data in the quantitative component may be subject to social desirability bias, particularly given the sensitivity of GBV as a topic. Future research should prioritise longitudinal mixed methods designs that can track the impact of economic empowerment interventions on GBV outcomes over time. Deeper exploration of the role of religious leaders and institutions in either perpetuating or challenging GBV-normalising norms would also be a valuable contribution. Comparative studies examining how different adat traditions and Islamic jurisprudential orientations interact with GBV dynamics across Indonesia's diverse regions would further enrich understanding of the structural drivers of violence.

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