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Gendered Poverty and Educational Exclusion among Young Women in *Pakpak Batak* Widow-Headed Households

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Abstract:

This study analyses the vulnerability of girls' access to formal education in poor female-headed households within the Kalak Pakpak community of Paggan Julu VIII, North Sumatra. Previous studies on educational inequality have generally focused on economic deprivation or gender discrimination separately, rarely explaining how patriarchal cultural structures, religious legitimacy, and poverty interact simultaneously in shaping educational exclusion among girls in indigenous female-headed families. This study uses a qualitative approach and a socio-legal perspective by synthesising Max Weber's theory of social legitimacy and power relations with Amina Wadud's Islamic feminist framework to analyse how patriarchal authority is socially reproduced and religiously justified within family and community life. Data were collected through life-story interviews with seven young female dropouts who entered marginalised labour sectors at an early age and were analysed using thematic narrative analysis. The analysis results reveal that the deprivation of girls' educational rights stems not merely from economic hardship; the intersection of poverty, patriarchal authority, and gender-biased religious interpretations also contributes to such a hurdle. This study conceptualises this condition as "patriarchal poverty," referring to a socio-cultural mechanism in which economic vulnerability and patriarchal norms mutually reinforce the exclusion of girls from formal education. From Weber's perspective, unequal educational access reflects socially legitimised domination embedded in

family and community structures, while Wadud's perspective demonstrates how patriarchal interpretations of Islamic teachings obscure the Qur'anic principles of justice and gender equality. Consequently, being both economic actors and subjects of gendered exclusion is a burden for girls. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of integrating socio-economic empowerment, gender-sensitive educational policies, and inclusive religious reinterpretation to strengthen girls' educational rights in marginalised communities. Future research is recommended to explore comparative studies across different indigenous and Muslim communities to examine the broader patterns of patriarchal poverty and educational exclusion.

Keywords: Gendered Poverty; Educational Exclusion; Widow-Headed Households; Islamic Feminism; Right to Education.

Introduction

Gender inequality against women persists in many traditional communities in Indonesia, including in the Pakpak community of North Sumatra.¹ In this context, patriarchal social structures continue to position women in subordinate roles in family and community life, particularly in poor female-headed households, often referred to as *Pekka*. One significant consequence of this condition is girls' vulnerable rights to formal education, where economic hardship, gender norms, and customary authority intersect, creating a barrier to access to education for girls. Legitimised in the name of culture, it is often manifested in various forms of violence, marginalisation, subordination, stereotyping, and double burden, all rooted in patriarchal cultural values and common in local communities.² Various reactions have emerged in response to gender inequality, especially from feminists. This emphasises that the roots of gender injustice, especially those related to culture, are closely related to patriarchal traditions seen as both a social system and an ideology.³ Patriarchy is not shaped overnight; it requires the history of

¹ Iswadi Bahardur, 'Perempuan Korban Kekerasan Berbasis Gender Dalam Novel Orang-Orang Blanti Karya Wisran Hadi', *Ideas: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 9, no. 1 (2023): 1–8, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32884/ideas.v9i1.1188>. <https://doi.org/10.32884/ideas.v9i1.1188>

² Nurul Afifah, 'Mengkaji Ulang Stereotip Gender: Eksplorasi Stereotip Gender Dalam Konteks Budaya Matrilineal Minangkabau', *Jurnal Dinamika Sosial Budaya* 26, no. 1 (August 2024): 93–104, <https://doi.org/10.26623/jdsb.v26i1.9779>; Abdul Bari Awang et al., 'An Analysis of the Justice of Faraid Law in Relation to the Concept of Qiwwamah in the Sustainability of the Muslim Family Institution', *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 8, no. 2 (December 2025): 1160–83, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v8i2.26431>. <https://doi.org/10.26623/jdsb.v26i1.9779>

³ Otong Sulaeman et al., 'Negotiating Gender Justice in Minangkabau Marital Disputes: Between Adat, Islamic, and State Law', *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 24, no. 1 (March 2025): 39–49, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i1.11848>; Haifa Rahma, 'The Implications of Patriarchal Culture toward Gender Discrimination in Anne with an E Movie Series', *CaLLs (Journal of Culture, Arts, Literature, and Linguistics)* 9, no. 2 (December 2023): 275–94, <https://doi.org/10.30872/calls.v9i2.12693>. <https://doi.org/10.24239/familia.v5i1.197>



human society and culture to form.⁴ Patriarchy in the Pakpak Pegagan Julu VIII community is obvious in both private and public domains. In the private sphere, men generally dominate household decision-making, including those determining children's education and resource allocation.⁵ Women are primarily assigned domestic and supportive roles, while girls are often positioned as secondary recipients of educational opportunities.⁶ This pattern illustrates how patriarchal values are reproduced within the family as the primary social institution.⁷

Gender inequality in the Pakpak family is evident in restricted access to formal education among girls, particularly those from financially incapable families headed by women.⁸ The female head of the family—*Pekka*—is generally a widow who covers her children's living expenses.⁹ In the traditional context, widowed women are often underappreciated and suffer from discriminatory practices, as their rights to speak, express opinions, and make strategic decisions are limited.¹⁰ Customary decisions are central in maintaining social order, including determining the social position of widowed women. These customary practices reinforce male-centred authority structures that limit widowed women's participation in strategic family and community decisions.¹¹ Poor

⁴ Nofialdi et al., "Urf, Gender, and Customary Law: Negotiating Women's Participation in Boar Hunting in Minangkabau, Indonesia", *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 25, no. 2 (December 2025): 279–303, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v25i2.279-303>.

⁵ Debora Matanari et al., 'Nilai Luhur Dan Problematika Dalam Adat Sulang Silima Suku Pak-Pak Pegagan Marga Matanari Di Desa Hutagugung Kabupaten Dairi', *Social Integrity Journal* 1, no. 2 (2024): 148–58; Supriyadi Supriyadi, Abdul Qodir Zaelani, and Linda Firdawaty, 'The Problematics of the Five Pillars of Household Concept in Mubādalāh Theory from the Perspective of Michel Foucault's Power Relations', *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah Dan Masyarakat* 26, no. 1 (June 2026): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v26i1.31124>, <https://doi.org/10.63462/7m085r66>.

⁶ Diah Rahmadhaniah Sitompul, 'Fungsi Kekerabatan Kelompok Marga Dalam Integrasi Sosial Pada Masyarakat Di Dusun Jumamangkat Desa Pegagan Julu X Kabupaten Dairi', *Jurnal Budaya Etnika* 6, no. 1 (2022): 19–28, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26742/jbe.v6i1.2016>, <https://doi.org/10.26742/jbe.v6i1.2076>.

⁷ Hadriana Marhaeni Munthe and Bisru Hafi, 'Pemberdayaan Gender Pada Tokoh Adat Untuk Mendukung Peran Perempuan Dalam Pembagunan Di Desa Pegagan Julu VIII, Sumbul, Kabupaten Dairi Sumatera Utara', *ABDIMAS TALENTA: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 3, no. 2 (2018): 401–7, <https://doi.org/10.32734/abdimastalenta.v3i2.4163>.

⁸ Hudiya Rohmati, 'Penerapan Konsep Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Rumah Tangga Sebagai Bentuk Ketahanan Keluarga Sakinah Mawadah Warahmah (Studi Kasus Di Dusun Gubuk Bangsal Desa Mekar Bersatu Kecamatan Batukliang Kabupaten Lombok Tengah)' (Undergraduate Thesis, Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2025), <https://dspace.uii.ac.id/handle/123456789/54821>.

⁹ Ramadhan Prasetya Wibawa and Liana Vivin Wihartanti, 'Strategi Perempuan Kepala Keluarga (Pekka) Dalam Menciptakan Kemandirian Ekonomi Keluarga Di Desa Gesi Kecamatan Gesi Kabupaten Sragen', *Promosi: Jurnal Program Studi Pendidikan Ekonomi* 6, no. 2 (December 2018), <https://doi.org/10.24127/pro.v6i2.1691>.

¹⁰ Nur Haini, 'Eksistensi Janda Dalam Meningkatkan Perekonomian Keluarga Perspektif Gender (Studi Di Desa Batu Bangka Kecamatan Moyo Hilir Kabupaten Sumbawa)', *QAWWAM: Journal for Gender Mainstreaming* 16, no. 1 (2022): 39–51, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20414/qawwam.v16i1.5258>, <https://doi.org/10.20414/qawwam.v16i1.5258>.

¹¹ Syaifudin S. Kasim et al., 'Etos Kerja Dan Kemandirian Ekonomi Perempuan Kepala Rumah Tangga (Janda) Pada Keluarga Miskin Di Perkotaan', *Indonesian Annual Conference Series*, 10 June 2022, 20–27, <https://ojs.literacyinstitute.org/index.php/iacseries/article/view/547>.



female heads of household have to bear a double burden, as they are responsible for meeting the household economic needs and ensuring children's education.¹² Limited resources force them to make priority decisions that tend to put boys first. As a result, girls become more vulnerable to dropping out of school or only accessing education at a lower level. In such a tradition, girls are often required to help finance their brothers' education by participating in either domestic work or work outside the village, rendering the cycle of subordination and gender inequality persistent across generations.¹³ Such vulnerability of rights among girls arises from the intersecting patriarchy and poverty. Inherent cultural norms, gender-biased family decisions, and economic pressures put girls at a disadvantage in determining educational priorities.¹⁴ Although Indonesian legal frameworks, including Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, and national compulsory education policies, formally guarantee equal educational rights for all children, these protections often fail to operate effectively within local patriarchal contexts where customary authority and economic vulnerability strongly influence educational decision-making.¹⁵ The vulnerability of girls' rights to education emerges from the interaction between patriarchal authority and economic marginalisation, where girls are systematically positioned as secondary priorities within household survival strategies.

Several previous studies have examined gender inequality, women's rights, and educational access from socio-cultural, legal, and religious perspectives. Najwa Qurrata'Ayun highlights the transformation of women's social roles in education, politics, economy, and culture, demonstrating that women's participation in public life has increasingly challenged patriarchal domination.¹⁶ Sridepi demonstrates that

¹² Faqihatin Faqihatin, Nur Faizah, and Maslakhatul Ainayah, 'Pemberdayaan Perempuan Kepala Keluarga Dalam Peningkatan Ekonomi Keluarga Melalui Program Bunda Puspita', *KNOWLEDGE: Jurnal Inovasi Hasil Penelitian Dan Pengembangan* 5, no. 2 (June 2025): 417–24, <https://doi.org/10.51878/knowledge.v5i2.5876>.

¹³ Mei Zuliawati and Oksiana Jatningsih, 'Persepsi Suami Dan Istri Terkait Beban Ganda Istri Dalam Keluarga Buruh Tambak Di Desa Pangkah Wetan Kecamatan Ujungpangkah Kabupaten Gresik', *Kajian Moral Dan Kewarganegaraan* 11, no. 1 (August 2022): 114–29, <https://doi.org/10.26740/kmkn.v11n1.p114-129>.

¹⁴ Muassomah Muassomah et al., 'Participatory-Based Character Education: Indonesian School Children's Experiences', *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 3 (2025): 1615–42, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i3.1969>; Abdul Basith Junaidy, Rusli Rusli, and Ahwan Fanani, 'Islamic Law Understanding and Female Breadwinners: Gender Equity or Economic Demand?', *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 20, no. 2 (2025): 616–42, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v20i2.15517>.

¹⁵ Armyn Hasibuan et al., 'Sufistic Approach of Character Education in an Indonesian Islamic Boarding School', *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 49, no. 1 (June 2025): 184–204, <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i1.1332>.

¹⁶ Najwa Qurrata'Ayun et al., 'Menggugat Kekuatan Patriarki: Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Transformasi Menuju Kesenjangan Gender', *Interdisciplinary Explorations in Research Journal* 2, no. 2 (June 2024): 677–94, <https://doi.org/10.62976/ierj.v2i2.528>; Muhammad Nafis and Insan Rofiqi, 'Analysis of Patriarchal Culture in the Consistency of Siri Marriage Practices in Sumenep, Madura: A Socio-Legal and Gender Analysis', *Al-Risalah Jurnal Ilmu Syariah Dan Hukum*, 11 July 2025, 482–96, <https://doi.org/10.24252/al->



egalitarian interpretations of Surah An-Nisa verse 34 can support more inclusive understandings of Islamic family law by integrating Qur'anic interpretation with feminist perspectives.¹⁷ In addition, Nursattini emphasises patriarchal culture that often prioritises boys' education, thereby limiting girls' access to formal education and reinforcing gender disparities.¹⁸

Although previous studies have discussed women's subordination, Islamic feminism, and educational inequality, they generally examine these issues separately. Existing studies have not sufficiently explained how patriarchal authority, poverty, customary structures, and religious legitimacy interact simultaneously in shaping the vulnerability of girls' educational rights within poor indigenous families headed by females. This study contributes a socio-legal and Islamic feminist explanation of how patriarchal authority, economic marginalisation, and religious legitimacy structurally reproduce girls' educational exclusion within poor indigenous female-headed households. This study specifically focuses on poor female-headed households within the Batak Pakpak community, examining how patriarchal authority, economic marginalisation, customary structures, and religious legitimacy simultaneously reinforce this vulnerability. Unlike previous studies that generally discuss patriarchy, poverty, or women's education separately, this research develops an integrated socio-legal and Islamic feminist framework by synthesising Max Weber's perspective on social legitimacy and power relations with Amina Wadud's critique of patriarchal religious interpretation. Through this framework, the study demonstrates that girls' educational exclusion is structurally reproduced through the interaction between economic survival strategies, gender-biased social norms, and legitimised patriarchal tradition within family and community institutions. Therefore, this research contributes not only to the theoretical development of socio-legal and Islamic feminist studies, but also to a deeper understanding of why formal legal guarantees of educational equality often fail to operate effectively in marginalised patriarchal communities.

Method

This study employed an empirical qualitative field research design using a feminist qualitative approach.¹⁹ The study examines the vulnerability of girls' rights to formal education among poor female-headed households—*Pekka*—in the Pakpak community

risalah.vi.57071; Saif Ziad Aljunidi, Farah Alshanik, and Emad M. Alamaren, 'Negotiating Women's Rights in Jordanian Electoral Law: Are They Fulfilled?', *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 33, no. 2 (December 2025): 648–71, <https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v33i2.42184>; Fitria Wahud et al., 'Reinterpreting Khadijah's Domestic and Social Agency: Insights from Fatima Mernissi's Gender Perspective', *An-Nisa' Journal of Gender Studies* 19, no. 1 (June 2026): 17–30, <https://doi.org/10.35719/an-nisa.v19i1.207>.

¹⁷ Sridepi Sridepi et al., 'Analisis Kedudukan Perempuan Dalam Hukum Keluarga Islam Perspektif Tafsir Surat An-Nisa Ayat 34 Dan Teori Feminisme', *JURNAL RISET RUMPUN ILMU PENDIDIKAN* 4, no. 2 (July 2025): 756–65, <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurripen.v4i2.5909>.

¹⁸ Nursaptini Nursaptini et al., 'Budaya Patriarki dan Akses Perempuan dalam Pendidikan', *AL-MAIYYAH: Media Transformasi Gender dalam Paradigma Sosial Keagamaan* 12, no. 2 (2019): 16–26.

¹⁹ Andrew March, 'Sources of Moral Obligation to Non-Muslims in the "Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities" (Fiqh al-Aqalliyyāt) Discourse', *Islamic Law and Society* 16, no. 1 (2009): 34–94, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851908X413757>.



through the lived experiences of girls who dropped out of primary and secondary school and entered marginalised labour sectors. The informants for this study are TR, LN, AT, MI, EM, MN, and MD. The feminist qualitative approach was used to prioritise women's voices, experiences, and gendered social realities, while Max Weber's sociology of law and Amina Wadud's Islamic feminist perspective²⁰ served as analytical frameworks for examining how patriarchal authority, social legitimacy, and gender-biased religious interpretations shape educational inequality. This study aims to examine the vulnerability of girls' rights to access education through perceived life experiences, with the research stages conducted from January to October 2025.²¹ The feminist qualitative approach involved life-story interviews, highlighting participants' subjective experiences, emotional narratives, and social positions within patriarchal family structures.²² This approach enabled the researcher to explore how girls interpreted educational exclusion, domestic responsibilities, and work experiences within the broader context of poverty, customary norms, and gender relations.

The research was conducted in Pegagan Julu VIII, a region representing the Pakpak Pegagan suak community in North Sumatra. This location was selected because it reflects a socio-cultural setting in which customary authority, patriarchal family structures, and economic vulnerability strongly influence educational decision-making. Although most participants identified as Muslim, access to the community was facilitated through both the *sulangsilima* customary institution and GKPPD (Pakpak Dairi Protestant Christian Church), which was established as a religious institution and serves as a longstanding community-based social network that maintains close relationships with families across different religious affiliations in the region.²³ The involvement of GKPPD was therefore related to community access and local trust networks rather than to the study's religious orientation. Simultaneously, the researcher remained aware that these institutions constitute part of the local power structure and could potentially influence participants' responses. To minimise this risk, participant recruitment was followed by independent rapport-building, repeated informal visits, and interviews conducted in settings chosen by participants without the presence of institutional representatives. Reflexive field notes were maintained throughout the research process to document potential influences of gatekeepers, researcher assumptions, and power relations that might affect data collection and interpretation.²⁴

²⁰ Firman Muntaqo et al., 'The Transformation of Land Law in Indonesia: From Commodification to Maqāsid and Social Justice', *Al-Ahkam* 35, no. 2 (October 2025): 287–312, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2025.35.2.25605>.

²¹ Gusti Muzainah et al., 'Female Circumcision in Banjar Culture: Navigating Customary Law, Islamic Law, and Human Rights', *Al-Ahkam* 35, no. 2 (October 2025): 371–400, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2025.35.2.27814>.

²² Sri Yunarti and Syarial Dedi, 'A Reconstruction Of Women's Fiqih On Tawaf For Menstruating Women: Exploring Ibn Qayyim Al-Zawjiyah's Theory of Ijtihad', *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 11, no. 1 (December 2025): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v11i1.12677>.

²³ Derita Prapti Rahayu, *Metode Penelitian Hukum*, Revisi (Yogyakarta: Thafa Media, 2020).

²⁴ Harry Yuniardi et al., 'Between Tradition and Sharia: Endogamous Marriage Practices in the Pesantren Community of Bandung Regency from a Contemporary Islamic Legal Perspective', *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 2 (July 2025): 899–932, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v4i2.10624>.



Village administrative data revealed approximately 30 poor female-headed households, or *Pekka*, in the research area. Of this population, seven girls aged 15–20 who had dropped out of primary or secondary school were purposively selected because they met the specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. Participant recruitment continued until thematic saturation was reached. Saturation was identified when successive interviews no longer generated substantially new information regarding the principal themes emerging from the data. These include educational discontinuation, gendered household responsibilities, economic survival strategies, parental decision-making, and the influence of customary norms on girls' educational opportunities. After the sixth and seventh interviews, recurring patterns consistently appeared across participants, and no new conceptual categories emerged, indicating that thematic saturation had been achieved.²⁵

The study began with a preliminary Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving *Pekka* widows to explore general perceptions regarding children's educational rights and gender-based educational priorities within the family.²⁶ The FGD represented the exploratory and contextual mapping stage rather than the primary source of findings. Insights from the FGD were used to refine interview themes, identify dominant gender norms, and support triangulation with the life-story interview data.²⁷ The next stage is to identify research informants by employing an intensive approach with girls from the family of widows of *Pekka*. The next stage was intensive life-story interviews with seven girls of Kalak Pakpak from different clans (*berru*). Interviews were conducted in multiple sessions lasting approximately 60–90 minutes each, allowing participants to narrate their educational experiences, family responsibilities, work experiences, and social relationships in depth. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to maintain flexibility while ensuring consistency across participants. Several interviews were conducted in the local Pakpak language and later translated into Indonesian and English during transcription while preserving the original meanings and narrative contexts.²⁸

Data analysis followed a thematic narrative analysis procedure. First, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly reviewed to ensure familiarity with the data. Second, open coding was conducted to identify meaningful statements, experiences, and recurring patterns related to educational exclusion, family decision-making, economic hardship, gender roles, and customary authority. Third, similar codes

²⁵ David Tan, 'Metode Penelitian Hukum: Mengupas Dan Mengulas Metodologi Dalam Menyelenggarakan Penelitian Hukum', *Nusantara: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* 8, no. 8 (2021): 2463–78, <https://doi.org/10.31604/jips.v8i8.2021>; Nur Astaman Putra and Mardiana Mardiana, 'Gender Equality Dynamics: Factors Driving Mompreneur Participation In Msmes In East Banggae District Majene Regency', *Egalita Jurnal Kesenjangan Dan Keadilan Gender* 21, no. 1 (May 2026), <https://doi.org/10.18860/egalita.v21i1.42812>.

²⁶ Muhammad Chairul Huda, *Metode Penelitian Hukum (Pendekatan Yuridis Sosiologis)* (Salatiga: IAIN SALATIGA, 2022).

²⁷ Ika Atikah et al., *Pengantar Metode Penelitian Hukum Sosio-Legal* (Bandung: CV Widina Media Utama, 2024).

²⁸ Ahmad Ahmad et al., *Buku Ajar Metode Penelitian & Penulisan Hukum* (Jambi: PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2024).



were grouped into broader categories and themes through an iterative process of comparison across participants' narratives. Fourth, themes were reviewed and refined by comparing them with interview transcripts, field notes, and FGD findings to enhance analytical consistency and credibility. In the last stage, the themes were interpreted using Max Weber's sociology of law and Amina Wadud's Islamic feminist framework. Weber's perspective was employed to examine how social legitimacy, customary authority, and community norms shaped compliance with educational rights, while Wadud's framework was used to critically analyse the role of gendered religious interpretations and patriarchal power relations in reproducing educational inequality. The integration of these frameworks enabled the study to connect individual experiences with broader legal, cultural, and religious structures.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. For participants under the age of 18, parental or guardian consent was obtained in addition to participant consent. All participants were informed of the study's objectives, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the confidentiality of their responses. To protect privacy, pseudonyms were used and identifying information was removed from transcripts and research reports. Given the potentially sensitive nature of discussions concerning educational deprivation, poverty, and family relations, interviews were conducted using a trauma-sensitive approach that allowed participants to pause, skip questions, or terminate interviews whenever they felt uncomfortable. Audio recordings, transcripts, and field notes were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher.

Results and Discussion

The Portrait of the Life of the *Pekka* Widows of Kalak Pakpak: Patriarchy, Poverty, and Vulnerability of Girls' Right to Education

The economic conditions of *Pekka* widows in Pegagan Julu VIII demonstrate a structural pattern of vulnerability in which limited access to productive resources directly affects educational decision-making within the households. Most *Pekka* families depend on small-scale rice farming on narrow plots of land ranging from one to three chains, while others survive through temporary agricultural labour without land ownership. This condition positions widowed women as both heads of households and primary income earners, while simultaneously limiting their control over economic resources. As a result, economic survival strategies often prioritise immediate household subsistence over girls' long-term access to education.²⁹ As one *Pekka* widow (MN) explained, "*After my husband died, I worked alone in the rice fields and sometimes as a farm labourer. The income was only enough for food. When I had to choose between daily needs and school expenses, I could not afford both.*"

In the Pakpak customary system, agricultural land inherited from deceased husbands remains subject to patrilineal primogeniture, under which inheritance rights

²⁹ Destya Salsabila and Setia Budhi, 'Antara Stigma Dan Realitas Sosial: Status Janda Dalam Pandangan Masyarakat Desa', *Huma: Jurnal Sosiologi* 3, no. 1 (February 2024): 29–39, <https://doi.org/10.20527/hjs.v3i1.210>.



are transferred primarily to male descendants. *Pekka* widows generally retain only limited management rights rather than full ownership or decision-making authority over family land. This arrangement structurally reinforces women's economic dependency despite their central role in sustaining household survival. Consequently, widowed mothers experience restricted capacity to allocate educational resources equally between sons and daughters, particularly under conditions of economic scarcity.³⁰ LN described her limited authority over inherited land: "*The land belongs to my husband's family line. I can cultivate it, but I cannot make important decisions about selling or using it without consulting the male relatives.*" The social structure of women in the Batak Pakpak community is generally subordinate to that of men under the patrilineal kinship system—it affirms the legal status of men as clan successors and descendants, while placing men in a dominant position in the family, marriage, property inheritance, and customary institutions. In contrast, women's positions, including *Pekka* widows, are often subordinate, with their roles limited to domestic affairs and family management, while strategic decision-making and access to inheritance rights remain in the hands of men. This reinforces women's economic and social dependence, while limiting their ability to set priorities, including their children's educational rights.³¹

One major pattern obtained from the data is the institutionalisation of gender-biased educational priorities within family and customary structures. Patriarchal norms embedded in Pakpak customary values position boys as the primary recipients of family educational investment, while girls are expected to adhere to domestic responsibilities and support the family's economic survival. This pattern demonstrates how patriarchal authority is reproduced intergenerationally through unequal educational allocation.³² EM -a 17-year-old female participant who left school after completing primary education - stated, "*My older brother continued his schooling because my family believed he would become the head of the household in the future. I was asked to stay at home, help my mother, and work when there was an opportunity.*" Similarly, AT explained, "*My parents said that if there was money for only one child to study, it should be my brother. They thought girls would eventually marry and join another family.*"

Table 1. Vulnerability of Girls' Right to Education

Informant	Educational Level	Exclusion Mechanism	Labour Burden	Legal/ Social Implication
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³⁰ Nifki Setya Welly and Genny Gustina Sari, 'Makna Hidup Janda Muda Pelaku Cerai Gugat Di Kota Pekanbaru', *Jurnal Online Mahasiswa (JOM) Bidang Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik* 4, no. 2 (November 2017): 1–13.

³¹ Helmi Suryana Siregar, 'Perubahan Kedudukan Perempuan Pada Masyarakat Batak Angkola', *Jurnal Ius Constituendum* 6, no. 1 (2021): 252, <https://doi.org/10.26623/jic.v6i1.3281>.

³² Wahyudin Wahyudin, Muhammad Anas Ma'arif, and Muhammad Husnur Rofiq, 'Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Pada Adat Istiadat Masyarakat Pakpak Di Pesantren', *FATAWA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 4, no. 1 (2023): 111–24, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37812/fatawa.v4i1.1540>.



TR	Secondary school	Prioritisation of brother's education	Internet café worker	Restricted educational access
LN	Year 2 of secondary school	Economic exploitation and domestic labour	Elderly caregiver	Potential child labour exploitation
AT	Year 5 of primary School	Domestic agricultural and burden	Housekeeper	Gendered educationl exclusion
MI	Year 2 of secondary school	Financial constraints and gender bias in education	School canteen waitress	Risk of early school dropout
EM	Secondary School	Domestic labour; prioritising family survival	Cleaner Chasier	Limited future career opportunities
MN	Primary school	Distance to school and economic vulnerability	Cleaner	Violation of the right to basic education
MD	Primary school	Household poverty and agricultural demands	Child farmhand	Intergenerational cycle of poverty

Source: Interviews with the public

The findings indicate that educational inequality within *Pekka* households systematically stems from gendered family priorities, where boys are perceived as future representatives of their customary tradition and economic assets, while girls are positioned as supplementary labour resources. This mechanism contributes to the intergenerational reproduction of educational inequality. This study conceptualises 'patriarchal poverty' as a structural condition in which economic scarcity and patriarchal authority mutually reinforce the exclusion of girls from educational access. Under such conditions, limited family resources are distributed according to patriarchal gender priorities that favour boys' education, redirecting girls toward domestic and income-generating responsibilities. As a result, girls experience educational marginalisation not merely because of economic deprivation, but because poverty operates through gendered social hierarchies embedded within family and customary structures.³³

The vulnerability of girls' educational rights in *Pekka* families results from a complex interaction between patriarchy, poverty, and cultural norms. The economic

³³ Ahmad Aridho, Saparutdin Brutu, Frans Togu Sihombing, 'Konsep Filosofis Pertuturan Sulang Silima Suku Pakpak Dalam Menjaga Persatuan Dan Kerukunan Di Tengah Keluarga', *Jurnal Pusat Studi Pendidikan Rakyat*, 29 May 2023, 53–61, <https://doi.org/10.51178/jpspr.v3i2.1350>.



limitations faced by *Pekka* widows force them to make priority decisions that favour boys, as they are considered more strategic or socially and economically productive. Meanwhile, girls often face the risk of dropping out of school or accessing only low levels of education, thereby leaving them with limited opportunities to optimally develop their potential. This condition renders the cycle of subordination and gender inequality persistent across generations, as unequal access to education puts women in a more vulnerable position in various aspects of social and economic life.³⁴

To understand the process of vulnerability to girls' educational rights, this study employed a life-story approach to seven Kalak Pakpak girls. The life stories of these seven girls concretely show how they experienced the disenfranchisement of the right to access formal education, influenced by gender-biased family decisions and the economic limitations of *Pekka* families. Through this approach, this study emphasises girls' subjective experiences as part of a social reality that combines patriarchal factors, poverty, and cultural norms. This approach not only features quantitative data, but also elevates girls' voices and perspectives, thus enriching understanding of the direct impact of gender inequality at the family level on their educational rights. The data analysis results portray the vulnerability of girls' rights from humanist and academic perspectives, while emphasising the need for gender-sensitive, context-specific interventions for *Pekka* families in the Batak Pakpak community. In general, the lives of the *Pekka* widows in Kalak Pakpak illustrate the complex interaction between patriarchy and poverty, thus creating a vulnerability to girls' educational rights. In families, girls are often marginalised, as customary norms, social structures, and economic limitations simultaneously reinforce cycles of subordination across generations.³⁵ This phenomenon confirms that gender inequality cannot be fully understood; it requires a multidisciplinary approach integrating social, legal, and Islamic feminist perspectives. By understanding the interaction between patriarchy, poverty, and culture, this study aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors that limit girls' rights, as well as the basis for formulating gender-sensitive and contextual intervention strategies for *Pekka* families in the Pakpak community.³⁶

³⁴ Johan Saputra, Indra Jaya Kusuma Wardhana, and Arie Wahyu Pranata, 'Reproduksi Sosial Dan Praktik Pernikahan Dini: Analisis Struktur Kemiskinan, Budaya, Dan Akses Pendidikan Masyarakat Pesisir Sampang Madura', *Prosiding SeNSosio (Seminar Nasional Prodi Sosiologi)* 6, no. 1 (December 2025): 471–79.

³⁵ Sylvia Chant, 'Women, Girls and World Poverty: Empowerment, Equality or Essentialism?', *International Development Planning Review* 38, no. 1 (January 2016): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2016.1>; Saidah et al., 'From Mediation to Advocacy: Post-Divorce Women's Empowerment Through Religious Court Practices in South Sulawesi, Indonesia', *Jurnal Al-Dustur* 9, no. 1 (June 2026): 212–27, <https://doi.org/10.30863/aldustur.v9i1.11184>.

³⁶ Hadriana Marhaeni Munthe, Harmona Daulay, and Napsiah Napsiah, 'Kebertahanan Janda Kristen Batak Toba Dalam Hidup Menjanda Setelah Cerai Mati Dan Cerai Hidup', *KURIOS (Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen)* 6, no. 2 (2020): 380–96, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v6i2.178>.



Between School and Economic Life: The Life Story of Kalak Pakpak's Seven Daughters

The life stories of seven Kalak Pakpak girls reveal recurring patterns of educational exclusion shaped by patriarchal family expectations and economic survival strategies. Across the narratives, girls were consistently positioned as economic supporters of the household, while boys were prioritised as recipients of educational investment. These life stories represent individual experiences that serve as evidence of broader structural mechanisms reproducing gender inequality within financially incapable *Pekka* households. To protect confidentiality, all names used in this section are pseudonyms. TR's experience illustrates how girls in poor *Pekka* households are positioned as economic substitutes for family survival. After completing secondary school, Tiur was encouraged to migrate to Medan and work as an internet café employee so that her income could support household expenses and finance her brothers' education. Reflecting on this decision, Tiur explained, *"After finishing secondary school, I wanted to continue studying, but my family said it would be difficult to pay the costs. My mother asked me to work in Medan so I could help support the family and my younger brothers' schooling."* Although the decision was presented as an economic necessity, it effectively redirected educational opportunities toward male siblings while positioning Tiur as a contributor to household survival. Being a school dropout, as in Tiur's case, demonstrates how patriarchal educational priorities intersect with economic vulnerability.

A similar pattern emerged in LN's life story. After leaving school during the second year of secondary school, she migrated to Medan and initially worked as an unpaid domestic worker and child caregiver within relatives' households. Recalling her experience, she shared, *"I stayed with relatives and helped take care of children and household work every day. At that time, I did not receive a salary because they said I was being helped by being allowed to stay there."* At the time she was put to work, she was below the age of eighteen. Her experience demonstrates how girls from poor households may become vulnerable to informal labour arrangements that blur the boundaries between family assistance and economic exploitation. In this context, her experience raises concerns, particularly when linked to Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which concerns protection from economic exploitation, and to the broader framework of Indonesian child protection regulations.

The experiences of AT, MD, and MN reveal a recurring pattern in which girls functioned as household economic buffers following paternal death or economic collapse. Their educational trajectories were interrupted during primary or secondary school, after which they entered low-wage labour sectors in Medan, including domestic work, canteen work, and caregiving services. Astuti explained that economic hardship left few alternatives, *"After my father died, there was no one to support the family. I stopped going to school because my mother could not afford the expenses, and I decided to work to help my younger siblings."* Likewise, Mide described how domestic and economic responsibilities gradually replaced educational aspirations: *"I often missed school because I had to help at home. Eventually, I stopped attending and started working because the family needed income."*



These narratives demonstrate how girls' labour becomes an informal survival mechanism within poor patriarchal households.

One participant also reported prolonged experiences of family conflict, gender-based discrimination, and coercive household expectations that contributed to educational discontinuation and economic displacement at an early age. Following family separation and worsening economic conditions, she migrated to Medan and entered informal labour sector to support household survival. She explained, "*After the family problems became worse, I could no longer continue school. I left for Medan to work because there was no other way to help my mother and support myself.*" Rather than focusing on sensitive personal details, this narrative highlights how family instability, poverty, and patriarchal dependency structures can simultaneously intensify girls' educational exclusion and economic vulnerability. The narratives of the seven girls collectively demonstrate a recurring structural pattern in which daughters are exploited to support the economy of financially incapable *Pekka* households while simultaneously experiencing educational exclusion. Their migration to the urban informal labour sector reflects the interaction between patriarchal educational priorities and household survival strategies. Although national educational policies formally promote equality, these findings indicate that girls' educational access remains constrained by socially legitimised gender hierarchies and economic vulnerability.

Double Oppression: Patriarchy and Poverty in Hindering Girls' Education in Kalak Pakpak

The findings reveal a pattern of double oppression experienced by girls in poor *Pekka* households, where patriarchal gender norms and economic deprivation simultaneously restrict educational access.³⁷ Patriarchal authority functions through family and customary structures that prioritise boys as future clan representatives and educational beneficiaries, while girls are redirected toward domestic and income-generating responsibilities.³⁸ Under such conditions, these gendered expectations become increasingly normalised as survival strategies within the household.³⁹ The life-story data demonstrate that patriarchal ideology functions as a practical decision-making framework within *Pekka* households. Educational investment is systematically directed toward boys, who are socially perceived as future representatives of their customary traditions and family protectors, while girls are expected to accept their limited right to education, representing familial devotion. This gendered prioritisation transforms educational inequality into a socially legitimate and culturally normalised practice.⁴⁰

³⁷ Bob Pierik, 'Patriarchal Power as a Conceptual Tool for Gender History', *Rethinking History* 26, no. 1 (2022): 71–92, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31604/jips.v8i8.2021>.

³⁸ Giovanna Galizzi, Karen McBride, and Benedetta Siboni, 'Patriarchy Persists: Experiences of Barriers to Women's Career Progression in Italian Accounting Academia', *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 99 (2024): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2023.102625>.

³⁹ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basic Blackwell Ltd, 1990).

⁴⁰ Nicole Ferry, 'Where Is the Patriarchy?: A Review and Research Agenda for the Concept of Patriarchy in Management and Organization Studies', *Gender, Work and Organization* 32, no. 1 (2025): 302–29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13145>.



LN shared in her interview, *“My mother said that sons carry the family name and honour, while daughters must support and serve their brothers so that the family will later be respected in customary life.”* This narrative reflects how patriarchal legitimacy is internalised within family socialisation processes. Girls are taught to perceive their sacrifice as moral devotion, while boys’ education is framed as a collective family investment. From another perspective, the findings indicate that girls’ absence from education is socially framed as obedience, familial responsibility, and respect toward male siblings. Through this process, patriarchal family norms normalise unequal rights to education, positioning girls as supporting actors within household survival strategies. Consequently, girls experience educational marginalisation and bear increased economic responsibilities from an early age. The position of girls who are expected to devote themselves to the educational needs of their brothers reflects a highly patriarchal gender relationship within the family. Several participants described a social expectation that sons should receive priority in education and family resources, while daughters were expected to support household needs and assist their brothers. One participant (MI) explained, *“My brother had to continue school because he would become the successor of the family. I was expected to help my mother and support the family economy.”* Furthermore, another participant stated, *“If there was money for only one child to study, my brother would be chosen first. I was told that as a girl I should help the family and eventually get married.”*

The above narratives suggest a gender hierarchy in which boys are positioned as primary beneficiaries of family investment, whereas girls are expected to provide support and sacrifice their own educational opportunities. In this article, the expressions “boys as kings” and “girls as servants” serve as analytical metaphors to describe the unequal distribution of authority, resources, and obligations within patriarchal family structures.⁴¹ Concretely, all social and economic resources in the family are provided for men, including in terms of school education. The right to access the best education has automatically belonged to men, with far less priority left for women.⁴² The injustice among girls is not limited to accepting such a condition. Even more painful, they are obliged to bear other fates arising from poverty. The confluence of patriarchal and poverty structures presents other sufferings directed toward girls, leaving them with multiple layers of suffering.⁴³ Patriarchy in the construction of gender ideology results in vulnerability to access higher formal education. In this patriarchal tradition, girls are

⁴¹ Elsa Naila, Nazwa Archika Chynta, and Ahmad Supena, ‘Dominasi Patriarki Dan Perlawanan Perempuan: Studi Feminisme Terhadap Novel Yuni’, *Jurnal Basataka (JBT)* 8, no. 1 (June 2025): 564–72, <https://doi.org/10.36277/basataka.v8i1.732>.

⁴² Ahsani Taqwiem, *Patriarki Dan Perlawanan Perempuan Dalam Konteks Bumi Manusia* (Indramayu: Penerbit Adab, 2024).

⁴³ Muchlas Abror and Hanifah Dwi Afrianti, ‘Representasi Perempuan Dalam Lirik Lagu Sal Priadi: Antara Reproduksi Dan Tantangan Terhadap Norma Gender Dalam Budaya Patriarki Indonesia’, *DEIKTIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra* 5, no. 1 (March 2025): 326–47, <https://doi.org/10.53769/deiktis.v5i1.1395>.



excluded and marginalised from their right to school education.⁴⁴ Furthermore, in such poverty, women are forced to toil for their family, leaving them with extreme burdens. Girls are likened to *boban horses* (economic support mechanisms) who bear the burden of injustice and are obliged to work to maintain the family economy and the continuity of their brother's education.⁴⁵

The impacts of patriarchy and poverty in this context have been detrimental for *Pekka* girls in the *Kalak Pakpak* family of Pegagan Julu VIII village. These two structures reinforce each other, constructing vulnerability among girls and hampering them from accessing formal education. Patriarchy is the normative foundation or ideology that parents adhere to in determining the children's education in the family. The principle that underlies the strong patriarchal ideology stems from the practice that prioritises the best education mostly for boys. However, most *Pekka* widows cannot afford to send their children to school. Some strategies are obviously intended to overcome the economic barriers to sending boys to higher education. Usually, *Pekka* widows are willing to give up their land as their only asset. In addition, maximising their role and power by working harder in their own fields or as peasants in other people's fields is another common strategy among them. In more extreme conditions, *Pekka* widows also encouraged, even sent, her daughters to work in the city to help with economic hurdles. From this practice came a cliché phrase that reflects gender inequality: "*boys go to the city for school, while girls go to the city for work.*" The phrase illustrates how education is positioned as a right and investment for boys, while girls are treated as the backbone of the family's economy.⁴⁶ The following table shows the relationship between patriarchal factors, poverty, education, and employment in the lives of *Pekka* girls.

Table 2. The relationship between patriarchy, poverty, education, and employment of seven daughters

⁴⁴ Bima Ardiansyah Lumban Tobing and Helga Yohana Simatupang, 'Peran Tradisi Dan Budaya Dalam Menciptakan Ketidakadilan Terhadap Wanita India', *Journal of Global Perspective* 2, no. 1 (February 2024): 85–97.

⁴⁵ Revy Ardinata Salim, 'Pentingnya Keluarga, Kerja Keras Dan Pengorbanan Dalam Little Woman', *Linguistika Kultura: Jurnal Linguistik Sastra Berdimensi Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (2023).

⁴⁶ Christine Hughes et al., 'Women's Economic Inequality and Domestic Violence: Exploring the Links and Empowering Women', *Gender & Development* 23, no. 2 (May 2015): 279–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2015.1053216>; Kurniati Abidin et al., 'Women and Domestic Violence in Bone, South Sulawesi: Sociological Perspectives, Legal Awareness, and Gender', *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 10, no. 2 (July 2026): 1163–87, <https://doi.org/10.22373/7bpj4837>; Wahyu Abdul Jafar et al., 'Gender Relational Ethics in the Nyambai Tradition: A Living Fiqh al- Munākahāt Perspective on Ta'āruf among the Lampung Indigenous Community', *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 26, no. 1 (June 2026): 31–46, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v26i1.50150>; Meisy Fajarani et al., 'Judicial Strategies in Addressing Domestic Violence: Gender-Responsive Legal Analysis from the Religious Court of Malang Regency, Indonesia', *Justicia Islamica* 23, no. 2 (June 2026): 477–504, <https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v23i2.11804>.



No	Name	Recent Education	Patriarchal Factor (Education Priority)	Poverty Factor (Economic Needs)	Occupation in the City
1	TR	Secondary	Boys' education comes first	His mother was a widow and could not afford school	Helper in a Café
2	LN	Year 2 secondary	Education for male siblings becomes the primary focus	His mother was a widow and was unable to finance education	Elderly nurse in a nursing home
3	AT	Year 5 primary	The role of women at home and in rice fields is prioritised	Living poorly, having to help mothers	Housekeeper
4	MI	Year 2 secondary	Daughters are required to help families	Losing a father and having to work to help the mother	School canteen waitress
5	EM	Secondary	Boys are more school-driven	The father left the family; poverty	Cleanliness → cashier
6	MN	Primary	Girls are considered more ready to do housework		Cleaner
7	MD	Primary	Daughters should help mother and rice fields		Assistant cook

Source: Interviews

This phenomenon illustrates the double oppression experienced by girls in poor *Pekka* households in Kalak Pakpak. In feminist and intersectionality studies, oppression is often understood as the result of multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage that operate simultaneously rather than independently.⁴⁷ In this study, girls experience double oppression arising from the intersection of patriarchy and poverty. Patriarchy

⁴⁷ Amina Wadud, 'Foreword', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 10, no. 4 (December 2008): 435–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740802393858>.



functions as a social and cultural system that prioritises boys' access to education, family resources, and future opportunities, while poverty constrains household decision-making and increases pressure on girls to withdraw from school and contribute to family survival. As a result, girls become disproportionately vulnerable to educational exclusion, as they occupy a social position simultaneously triggered by gender subordination and economic marginalisation.⁴⁸ This reality demonstrates that limitations on girls' educational rights are not merely the consequence of economic hardship; they have been caused by intersecting social structures that reproduce traditional gender roles and unequal access to educational opportunities.

The impact of patriarchy is evident in the pattern of education priorities in the *Pekka* families in Kalak Pakpak, where boys are allowed to continue their education, while girls are intended to help with homework or support the family economy. Girls are expected to conform to traditional gender roles, such as working in rice fields, taking care of the house, or working in the city as maids, cashiers, or cleaners. The psychological burden also arises, as they are forced to submissively accept this injustice, with concerns of disrupting family relationships or adding to the burden of their struggling mothers. For example, Tiur, Astuti, and Lbrn were willing to drop out of school to pay for their brothers' education, demonstrating enormous personal sacrifice in a poor family. Financial problems are the primary contributing factor to dropout or failure to pursue higher education. To help the family's economy, women are forced to leave the village and have worked in the city since they were teenagers. Their economic life is heavily dependent on the job, as most of the income is left to the mother or used to finance their male siblings' education. For instance, Mende and Marni only graduated from primary school, work as cooks' assistants or cleaners, and almost all of their salaries go toward the family's needs. This reality shows that poverty reinforces girls' vulnerable educational rights. The interaction between patriarchy and poverty creates a dual burden for girls, as they lose the right to education and are forced to bear the economic responsibility of the family. Patriarchy seems to determine who is allowed to pursue education, while poverty likely determines who has to work to survive. This situation creates structural inequalities that are quite challenging to overcome without gender-sensitive social, legal, and educational interventions.

Social norms and economic factors further contribute to the vulnerability of girls' educational rights. Girls, in this context, remain marginalised despite the guarantee by the government for educational equality. From the perspective of Islamic feminism, women have equal educational rights, so patriarchal practices contradict the principle of gender justice in religion. In this context, sociolegal analysis and Islamic feminist

⁴⁸ Nur Syafiqoh, Muhammad Fikri Ramadhan, and Abdulloh Sama-ae, 'Institutional Approaches to Divorce Prevention: A Comparative Study of Premarital Counseling in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand', *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 3, no. 01 (May 2026): 41–51, <https://doi.org/10.63731/jhk.v3i01.54>; Mhd Yazid, 'Between Peace and Gender Justice: Islamic Court Mediators' Perspectives in Divorce Mediation in West Sumatra', *Journal of Islamic Law* 7, no. 1 (February 2026): 168–92, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v7i1.2644>; Muhammad Danil et al., 'From Provider to Partner: Reconstructing the Legal Concept of Livelihood Obligation in Indonesian Islamic Family Law through the Lens of Gender Justice and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah', *Sakina: Journal of Family Studies* 10, no. 2 (June 2026): 160–73, <https://doi.org/10.18860/jfs.v10i2.29511>.



perspectives affirm that the protection of girls' educational rights must remain a priority, both through public policy and the strengthening of social awareness. The vulnerability issue affecting girls in Kalak Pakpak is not solely due to economic hardship; social and cultural structures that prioritise men also seem to be the cause. Therefore, interventions in the form of education, social policies, and gender awareness are key to reducing this vulnerability, particularly in ensuring girls' access to their educational rights, while affirming the principles of gender justice in society and in legal and religious perspectives.

Girls' Educational Vulnerability Amid Patriarchy and Poverty: An Analysis of the Sociology of Law from the Perspectives of Max Weber and Amina Wadud as an Islamic Feminist

The findings of this study indicate that the educational vulnerability of girls in poor *Pekka* households cannot be understood solely as a consequence of economic deprivation. Rather, it emerges from the interaction among patriarchal authority, customary legitimacy, household survival strategies, and gendered social expectations that shape educational decision-making. The experiences of the seven girls in Kalak Pakpak demonstrate that decisions regarding school continuation were not determined by individual preference alone, but were embedded within broader structures of power and legitimacy within family and customary institutions.⁴⁹ The persistence of educational Inequality illustrates the tension between rational-legal authority and traditional authority. Rational-legal authority is represented by state laws and educational policies that formally guarantee equal educational rights for all children regardless of gender, including constitutional provisions, national education legislation, and child protection regulations that recognise education as a fundamental right.⁵⁰ However, the findings indicate that these formal legal protections are often subordinated to traditional forms of authority embedded within family and customary structures. In Weberian terms, traditional authority derives its legitimacy from long-established customs, inherited social norms, and collective expectations that are accepted by community members as natural and binding. Consequently, educational decisions are frequently guided not by formal legal principles of equality but by customary beliefs that prioritise boys' education over girl".⁵¹

The poverty factor in Weber's analysis further strengthens this inequality. Economic limitations shape the rationality of family actions in distributing limited resources. Under conditions of poverty, families were compelled to make difficult decisions about how to allocate scarce resources. The narratives given by Tiur, Lbrn, Astuti, Mide, and Mende demonstrate that family members often regarded the education

⁴⁹ Viktoriia Kobko -Odarii et al., 'Reconstructing Gender Equality in Family Law: A Normative and Comparative Analysis of European Family Law Systems in Religious Context', *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 25, no. 1 (August 2025): 195–214, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v25i1.17694>.

⁵⁰ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: Treatise in the Sociology*, in Allen Lane The Penguin Press (London: Penguin Group, 1991).

⁵¹ Lukman Santoso et al., *MEMAHAMI TEORI HUKUM: Percikan Pemikiran Ilmu Hukum Lintas Mazhab* (Yogyakarta, 2022), <https://repository.iainponorogo.ac.id/1331/>.



of boys as a more rational and valuable investment because sons were expected to become future household leaders, clan successors, and providers. Consequently, daughters were expected to contribute to household survival through domestic work or wage-based labour. These decisions are rarely perceived by family members as discriminatory. Instead, they are understood as socially legitimate responses to economic hardship. Weber's concept of legitimate domination helps explain why such practices persist despite formal legal guarantees of equality. The authority exercised within the family is accepted because it reflects customary norms that have acquired social legitimacy over generations. As a result, girls' educational exclusion becomes normalised as part of everyday household decision-making rather than being recognised as a violation of rights.⁵²

This condition reflects the existence of gender-biased religious interpretations and practices. Wadud argues that women's subordination does not originate from the teachings of Islam itself, but from patriarchal interpretations that have developed in history and culture. The practice of prioritising girls' education is clearly contrary to the principles of *al'adl* (justice) and the moral equality of human beings in the Qur'an. Therefore, girls' educational rights must be understood as inherent rights and moral obligations that cannot be negotiated by economic or traditional reasons.⁵³ Wadud further argues that women's subordination does not originate from the normative teachings of Islam but from patriarchal interpretations that have become embedded in social and cultural practices.⁵⁴ This argument is particularly relevant to the findings of this study. Although participants frequently described educational decisions as economic necessities, the narratives reveal that these decisions were also shaped by assumptions that boys deserved greater educational investment because they would inherit social responsibilities and represent the family lineage. Such assumptions reflect patriarchal cultural values rather than religious principles that explicitly prioritise male education. Therefore, the findings support Wadud's critique that gender inequality is often sustained by socially accepted interpretations and practices presented as natural or morally justified, even when they conflict with broader principles of justice and equality.

The relevance of Wadud's perspective in this study should not be understood as an analysis of a specific religious institution. Although access to participants was facilitated partly through GKPPD as a community gatekeeper, the study focuses on the educational experiences of girls within the broader socio-cultural context of the Pakpak community, including Muslim participants and families influenced by local customary norms.

⁵² Boy Anto Ando Silitonga, Jefrit Johanis Messakh, and Lamhot Naibaho, 'Analisis Kapitalisme Max Weber Sebagai Jalan Pendidikan Agama Kristen Menghadapi Kemiskinan', *Harati* 3, no. 2 (2023): 189–204, <https://doi.org/10.54170/harati.v3i2.152>.

⁵³ Ahmad Akram Mahmad Robbi and Mek Wok Mahmud, 'Maqāsid Al-'Adl (Keadilan) Dalam Isu Tuntutan Harta Sepencarian Di Malaysia (The Objective of Fairness (al-'Adl) in The Matrimonial Property Conflict in Malaysia)', *Journal of Islam in Asia* 17, no. 3 (November 2020): 291–320, <https://doi.org/10.31436/jia.v17i3.986>.

⁵⁴ Amina Wadud, 'Reflections on Islamic Feminist Exegesis of the Qur'an', *Religions* 12, no. 7 (July 2021): 497, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070497>; Ramadhita Ramadhita, 'The Sharing of Childcare Roles in Contemporary Muslim Families: A Critical Analysis of Amina Wadud's Thought', *International Conference on Law, Technology, Spirituality and Society (ICOLESS)* 3 (December 2023): 505–17.



Wadud's framework is employed as a normative and analytical perspective for examining how gendered assumptions become socially legitimised and how alternative interpretations grounded in equality and justice may challenge such practices. The use of Islamic feminist theory is therefore intended to illuminate gender relations and educational inequality rather than to evaluate particular religious organisations.⁵⁵

The integration of Weber's sociology of law and Wadud's Islamic feminist perspective provides a more comprehensive explanation of girls' educational vulnerability. Weber helps explain how patriarchal authority acquires legitimacy and overrides formal legal protections through customary and family structures. Wadud, meanwhile, provides a normative critique of the gender ideologies that justify such inequalities and offers an alternative framework grounded in justice, equality, and human dignity. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that girls' educational exclusion is not simply an economic matter; it is a socio-legal and cultural phenomenon rooted in the interaction between poverty, patriarchal legitimacy, customary authority, and gendered power relations.

The findings of this study therefore indicate that girls' educational vulnerability in poor *Pekka* households represents a structurally reproduced inequality. Formal educational rights remain insufficient when local systems of authority continue to legitimise unequal educational investment between sons and daughters. Girls become positioned as economic buffers for household survival while simultaneously being denied opportunities for higher education. This process reproduces gender inequality across generations by limiting girls' access to educational resources, social mobility, and future economic opportunities. Based on these findings, efforts to strengthen girls' educational rights require integrated socio-legal, economic, cultural, and educational interventions. First, strengthening the economic capacity of female-headed households is essential to reduce dependency on gender-biased survival strategies that prioritise boys' education over girls'. Economic empowerment programmes,⁵⁶ access to productive resources, and social protection mechanisms for widowed women should therefore be expanded within marginalised indigenous communities. Second, educational policies should move beyond formal equality by incorporating gender-sensitive interventions targeted at vulnerable rural households.⁵⁷ Scholarship programmes, educational assistance for girls from economically disadvantaged families, and community-based monitoring systems are needed to prevent girls from dropping out of school at the primary and secondary school levels.

Third, socio-legal interventions should strengthen the effectiveness of protections for educational rights within local customary contexts. Since the findings demonstrate

⁵⁵ Hughes et al., 'Women's Economic Inequality and Domestic Violence: Exploring the Links and Empowering Women'.

⁵⁶ Nelly P. Stromquist, 'Women's Empowerment and Education: Linking Knowledge to Transformative Action', *European Journal of Education* 50, no. 3 (September 2015): 307–24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12137>.

⁵⁷ Martha Eri Safira et al., 'Transcendental Emancipatory Unification of Family Law in Muslim Majority Countries in Southeast Asia', *El-Mashlahah* 16, no. 1 (June 2026): 183–208, <https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v16i1.11211>.



that traditional authority often overrides rational-legal authority, state institutions should engage more actively with customary institutions such as *sulangsilima* to promote interpretations of customary norms that are compatible with gender equality and children's rights. Finally, gender awareness initiatives and religious education programmes should emphasise principles of justice, equality, and equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. In line with Wadud's perspective, such initiatives should challenge patriarchal assumptions that normalise girls as school dropouts and instead promote the understanding that girls' education constitutes both a fundamental right and an essential component of social justice.⁵⁸

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the vulnerability of girls' educational rights within poor *Pekka* households in the Pakpak community is produced through the interaction of patriarchal authority, economic deprivation, and customary social norms. The life stories of seven girls reveal a recurring pattern in which educational resources are preferentially allocated to sons, whereas daughters are expected to assume domestic responsibilities or enter the informal labour sector to contribute to household survival. These findings contribute to the literature by developing the concept of patriarchal poverty—a condition in which economic hardship does not affect family members equally but operates through gendered power relations that systematically disadvantage girls. Unlike conventional poverty approaches that emphasise material scarcity alone, the concept highlights how poverty is mediated by patriarchal decision-making structures that shape the distribution of educational opportunities, labour responsibilities, and family resources.

The integration of Max Weber's sociology of law and Amina Wadud's Islamic feminist perspective provides a socio-legal explanation for the persistence of educational inequality despite formal legal protections. Weber's framework demonstrates how traditional authority and socially accepted forms of legitimate domination embedded in family and customary institutions frequently take precedence over rational-legal guarantees of educational equality. Educational decisions are guided not only by economic considerations but also by culturally legitimised assumptions regarding the social value of sons and daughters. Wadud's perspective complements this analysis by showing that the educational marginalisation of girls is sustained not by religious principles themselves but by patriarchal interpretations and gendered social practices that normalise unequal access to educational opportunities. Together, these perspectives reveal that educational exclusion is reproduced through the interaction of economic constraints, customary legitimacy, and gendered power relations.

The findings suggest several practical implications directly connected to participants' reported experiences. First, targeted educational assistance for girls from poor female-headed households should be prioritised, particularly during the transitions from primary to secondary school and from secondary to high school, as these stages

⁵⁸ Hani Sholihah, Nani Nani Widiawati2, and Mohd Khairul Nazif bin Hj Awang Damit, 'Reinterpretation of Justice in Islamic Inheritance Rights Based on Gender', *Al-'Adalah* 21, no. 1 (June 2024): 101–24, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v21i1.21256>.



emerged as critical points of school discontinuation. Second, social protection and livelihood-support programmes for widowed women should be strengthened to reduce household dependence on daughters' labour as a survival strategy. Third, community-based awareness initiatives involving parents, educators, and local leaders are vital to challenging gender-biased assumptions that position boys as the primary beneficiaries of educational investment and girls as economic support instruments for the family.

Several limitations should be acknowledged, given that the study was based on life-story interviews with seven participants drawn from a single village in the Pakpak community, which limits the transferability of the findings to other socio-cultural contexts. Participant access was initially facilitated through local community institutions, creating the possibility of gatekeeper influence despite efforts to establish independent rapport and conduct interviews outside institutional settings. In addition, some interviews were conducted in the Pakpak language and subsequently translated into Indonesian and English, which may have affected certain cultural nuances and meanings despite careful attention during transcription and interpretation. Consequently, the findings should be understood as context-specific rather than representative of all indigenous or Muslim communities in Indonesia. Future research should expand the geographical scope of investigation by comparing different indigenous, rural, and Muslim communities to examine how gender, poverty, customary authority, and educational decision-making interact across diverse socio-cultural settings. Comparative socio-legal studies would also help assess whether the concept of *patriarchal poverty* identified in this research operates similarly in other contexts or takes different forms according to local systems of authority, kinship, and economic organisation.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently without any financial, commercial, or personal relationships that could have influenced the study's design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or publication.

Declaration of the use of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist with language editing and improving the readability of the English manuscript. The authors remained fully responsible for the conceptualization, research design, data collection, data analysis,



interpretation of findings, and the final content of the manuscript. No AI tool was used to generate research data, conduct data analysis, or formulate the study's scientific conclusions.

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Hadriana Marhaeni Munthe contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing original draft. Lina Sudarwati contributed to supervision, validation, writing review & editing. Napsiah contributed to theoretical framework, formal analysis, writing review & editing. Asimayanty Siahaan contributed to data collection, investigation, resources, project administration.

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