



CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS THROUGH EDUCATION (CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN TEACHERS' COLLEGES AND INDONESIAN LITERACY SCHOOLS)

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Abstract:

For everyone, education is the most important prerequisite and constitutional right. It assists individuals in reducing inequality and plays an important role in human development, which impacts overall socio-economic growth. Improved health, nutritional status, economic growth, population reduction, weaker empowerment and society as a whole are all benefits of increased literacy and education. Women's empowerment is the foundation for achieving gender equality, which is characterized by individual responsibilities, rights, and opportunities that do not depend on their gender. Thus, it is very important for Social Institutions to contribute to providing empowerment activities through education for women. The purpose of this study is to see how the contribution made by social institutions, especially the Indonesian Teacher School and the Indonesian Literacy School program in implementing empowerment programs through educators for women. This research method uses a qualitative research method that is descriptive, a process in which the researcher describes this conceptual framework as resembling a repetitive process. Then the researcher conducted interviews with beneficiaries and program managers. In addition, the researcher also reviewed published literature that focused on the relationship between education and women's empowerment. The results of this study show that the Indonesian Teacher School and the Indonesian Literacy School program are empowerment programs that focus on education for teachers and public awareness of the importance of literacy which is dominated by women. The contributions made by the two programs are focused on the formation of *critical thinking, personal competence, social competence, and productive competence*. The competencies formed are very beneficial for beneficiaries to continue to be empowered.

Keywords: *Empowerment, Education, Women*

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered a basic requirement and fundamental right for any citizen. Education is a powerful tool for reducing inequality because it empowers individuals to become self-reliant. Women, who face discrimination in many areas, have a special need for this. Education is considered a crucial milestone in women's empowerment because it enables them to face challenges, confront their traditional roles, and transform their lives. Women's education is

the most powerful tool for transforming their position in society. Many women in our country are still illiterate, underdeveloped, weak, and exploited. Education also reduces inequality and serves as a means to improve their status within the family. Empowerment and capacity building provide avenues for women to acquire practical information and learning for better livelihoods. India can become a developed nation only if women contribute to the fullest extent of their capacities and abilities, which are possible when they are educated and empowered (Shetty & Hans, 2015).

Women's empowerment refers to the process of improving the economic, social, cultural, and political status of women in society, who have traditionally been oppressed and neglected. Numerous studies have shown that women are more likely than men to spend a larger portion of their household income on their children's health and education. When women are empowered to earn, accumulate assets, and improve their financial security, they create the capacity to support industry and stimulate economic development by creating new jobs and expanding the country's talent pool and available human resources (Hasin and Musa, 2018).

Women's empowerment is fundamental to achieving gender equality, characterized by individual responsibilities, rights, and opportunities independent of gender (Hasin and Musa, 2018). Women's empowerment, including decision-making skills, strategic lifestyle choices, and changes in welfare programs for women, are examples of women's empowerment (Engida, 2021).

Education is the most powerful tool for improving the world. According to Ruqia (2018), empowering women and equipping countries for comprehensive economic development is crucial. When women plan for equitable access to education and equal rights, they continue to engage in economic activities. Education is one of the most important factors in improving women's living conditions. There are several drawbacks to not educating women, including fewer jobs, lower family incomes, the possibility of exploitation, and limited overall economic development of the country. Unutilized human resources, especially in developed countries, are a source of concern for women.

They develop the power and voice to make choices and bring about meaningful social change as a result of their education (JhA, 2014). Education is important for everyone, but it is especially crucial for girls and women. This is because education is not only a gateway to success but also because women are the ones who carry on educational success within their families and across generations, with a profound ripple effect. The most powerful tool for enhancing women's role in society is education (Srivastava, 2014).

Empowerment, as mentioned above, is the ability to make choices and transform them into desired actions. There is a need to provide women with access to the means of empowerment. One key way this access can be ensured is through education. Education here is not just about literacy, but also about awareness of the social injustices and discrimination women face; it is about a critical understanding of the relationship between women's own lives and the larger socio-political structures of which they are a part. Being educated means being empowered with the tools to decode patriarchal structures and actively seek to deconstruct their norms. Education, especially critical education, helps women negotiate existing power structures, build collectives, and bring about change. This kind of education can ultimately lead to women's empowerment (Ghosh et al., 2015).

Education is the cornerstone of women's empowerment because only educated women can play a very dominant role in the economic development of our country as well as in becoming informed citizens, parents, and family members. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow, implying that many women in our country are still illiterate, weak, backward, and exploited. Therefore, "educating women" is the most powerful tool that can bring about changes in women's position in society, bringing about a reduction in inequality and functioning as a means to improve their status in the family. Education not only implies acquiring knowledge but also transforming that knowledge into application through vocational training and skill development (Shetty & Hans, 2015).

Empowering women in education is not solely the responsibility of the government; as members of society, we play a vital role and can also contribute by initiating empowerment programs that benefit women. This is evident in the various programs initiated by Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia, demonstrating the development of philanthropic practices. These programs are not solely focused on direct donations for consumption, charity, and short-term purposes. They also focus on sustainable and long-term community empowerment activities (Irham, 2020). This is evidenced by the emergence of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) after the Reformation, offering a wider variety of programs and activities aimed at empowering communities, particularly those less fortunate.

In this study, researchers focused on women's empowerment. NGOs also play a role in improving teaching capacity by providing training and professional development for elementary school teachers. These programs cover a wide range of topics, from innovative teaching techniques to effective classroom management and technology integration in education (Muh. Ishaq Samad, 2013). Through regular workshops, seminars, and direct mentoring, teachers can improve their skills in designing engaging and relevant curricula, providing constructive feedback to students, and creating inclusive and achievement-enhancing learning environments.

National Teacher Count: A total of 3.37 million teachers were registered across Indonesia in the 2022/2023 academic year, a 2.70% increase compared to the previous year's 3.28 million teachers. <https://tebokab.bps.go.id/>. The Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM) measures the state of community literacy based on two main components: Community Literacy Building Elements (UPLM) and Community Aspects (AM). UPLM includes the availability of library services, collections, library staff, and other facilities. AM includes the level of community visits, involvement in literacy activities, and the number of library members. sirusa.web.bps.go.id

In research written by (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2016) created a typology of competencies that an ideal education for girls should provide. Although we have created distinct categories for organizational and discussion purposes, in reality, these overlap and are difficult to disentangle. The four competencies we identified consist of: critical thinking and knowledge acquisition; productive competencies; personal competencies; and social competencies. Of course, few schools or educational programs can provide all of these, especially in poorly resourced settings, but an ideal education should strive to achieve these elements.

The capacity for critical thinking is crucial because it transcends subject matter divisions. By critical thinking, we refer to "a mode of thinking—about any subject, content, or problem—in which the thinker improves the quality of his or

her thinking by skillfully taking over the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards on them" (Scriven and Paul, 1987). Critical thinking is key to the empowerment process because this competency will enable girls and boys to analyze gender relations and critique social norms that lead to exclusion (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2016).

Empowering education will promote a number of processes we have termed "personal" because they relate to an individual's thoughts, habits, and dispositions. These include self-awareness, self-care, and personal development. More specifically, education should provide a space for students to reflect on their *raison d'être*, the purpose of their existence. For many individuals, this purpose will be connected to spirituality or religion (estimates suggest that over 84% of the world's population has a faith), yet many previous conceptualizations of empowerment have overlooked the centrality of spirituality and its potential as a catalyst and support for empowerment.

As Noddings (2013) has compellingly articulated, "students should be encouraged to think about their spiritual lives and examine the encounters that produce spiritual elevation" (p. 130). Linked to reflection on one's *raison d'être* is the recognition that one has the potential to contribute positively to society. At the critical stage of adolescence when young people are considering their future careers and life paths, education should provide opportunities for individuals to think critically about their strengths and weaknesses, their talents, their habits, and their likes and dislikes, and ultimately to support students in cultivating their innate strengths and dispositions so as to maximize their potential contribution to social well-being (Angguk, 2013).

Personality traits such as resilience, self-regulation, emotional awareness, discipline, and perseverance will, of course, vary among individuals, and quality education will foster rather than stifle these traits. Developing personal competence also involves understanding one's sexuality, which is especially important for this age group as they enter puberty and begin to experience sexual desire. More specifically, empowering education should foster knowledge and habits for physical and sexual health (e.g., exercise, nutrition, hygiene, disease prevention, sexually transmitted infection prevention, birth control methods).

Concrete examples of productive competencies in the economic field include financial literacy, entrepreneurship, environmental management, and agricultural/farming skills. Students can learn these through service-learning projects or internships with small businesses or experts in their communities. In addition to learning to produce goods and services, educational empowerment should encourage social engagement, which can include community-building skills, leading public awareness campaigns, organizing and outreach skills, and interpersonal skills (these overlap significantly with the social competencies outlined above). These skills will provide a strong foundation for students to have a source of income/livelihood and become contributing members of society/responsible citizens.

Critical Thinking and Learning	Personal Competence	Social Competence	Productive Competence
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- Literacy and communication (including multilingualism)	- Self-awareness (identifying strengths and weaknesses, sexuality)	- Development of pro-social and moral values and respect for human rights	- The ability to generate, create, and produce (both in the economic and social spheres)
- Social studies	- Spirituality (encouraging an examination of one's spiritual life, experiences that result in "spiritual highs")	- Development of friendships and a sense of social connectedness	- Economic sphere: financial literacy, entrepreneurship, agricultural/plantation/technical skills, and environmental management
- Numeracy and mathematics	- Self-care (physical health and nutrition, sexual health)	- Ability to communicate, negotiate, and work productively with others	- Social sphere: leading public awareness campaigns, community development efforts, organizational and outreach skills, and interpersonal skills
- Science and technology	- Personal development (e.g., emotional awareness, resilience, self-protection, perseverance)	- Understanding of social systems and local and global issues that affect the well-being of oneself and others	

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Capital Theory

Human capital can be defined as the collection of knowledge, skills, attitudes, talents, and other characteristics acquired and contributing to the production process (Goode, 1959). Human Capital Theory emphasizes that individuals are a key asset in the development process, whose potential can be enhanced through investments in education, training, health, and experience (Becker, 1993). From this perspective, education is considered a long-term investment that can improve a person's skills, productivity, and ability to contribute both economically and socially (Schultz, 1961).

In the context of women's empowerment, human capital theory serves as a crucial foundation for promoting gender equality and inclusive socioeconomic development (Yunika et al., 2024). Furthermore, this theory emphasizes that improving access to and the quality of education for women will contribute to the creation of superior human resources. Education plays a role not only in developing cognitive capacity and technical skills, but also in building self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and the active involvement of women in various aspects of life, including in decision-making in the family, community,

and workplace (Kabeer 1999; UNESCO, 2022).

Education for women has a significant multiplier effect. Educated women generally have higher levels of health awareness, tend to have fewer children, are more concerned about their children's education, and are active in community development activities (World Bank, 2018). In the long term, investing in women's education can improve the well-being of families and communities, while accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on quality education and Goal 5 on gender equality (UNDP, 2020).

The application of human capital theory to women's empowerment in the education sector emphasizes the importance of several factors. First, equitable access for women to both formal and non-formal education is essential. Second, women's capacity as educators, facilitators, and literacy activists is essential. Third, addressing women's participation in education is crucial. Fourth, empowerment through skills training and self-development is also an integral part. With these efforts, women's empowerment through education not only benefits women personally but also contributes significantly to broader social and economic progress. This view aligns with the thinking of Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, who stated that investing in women's education has positive impacts at both the individual and societal levels (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961).

Women Empowerment

Women still often experience inequality in various aspects of life and across many levels of society. Therefore, it is important to provide them with equal opportunities through empowerment efforts. Empowerment itself is a multidimensional social process that allows individuals to gain control over their lives. Furthermore, empowerment is a process that awakens a person's potential and strengths so they can utilize them for their own lives, their communities, and the wider community, especially in addressing issues they deem important (Mandal, 2013). According to Bhadra (2001), the term empowerment is often used to describe the process of increasing the power of previously weak groups to maintain equality with more dominant groups.

Women's empowerment is not only important but also a crucial element in driving the progress of society and the nation as a whole. This topic has become a primary focus of various programs and activities of the United Nations, as well as other governmental and non-governmental organizations. Women's empowerment is a strategic effort to increase women's capacity to gain access to and control over resources in the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. The goal is to empower women to manage themselves independently, increase their self-confidence, and play an active role in resolving various social issues. Thus, women's empowerment encourages the development of potential and the formation of a positive self-concept (Ihsan, 2019).

Furthermore, women's empowerment plays a crucial role in realizing a more just and balanced social order (Sugitanata et al., 2024). Gender equality is not only a human rights issue but also a key aspect in supporting the achievement of sustainable development (Judaisih, 2022). One strategy to empower women is through education. Through education, women gain access to knowledge, skills, and awareness of their rights, ultimately increasing their participation in public life. Research by Nurlatifah et al. (2020) shows that community-based education programs such as the Women's School (Sekoper Cinta) can strengthen women's decision-making capacity within the family and community. Furthermore,

education is also an important tool in establishing economic independence. Rahim (2024) states that economic education significantly contributes to increasing women's income and reducing financial dependence on others.

Indonesian Teachers' School (SGI) and Indonesian Literacy School (SLI)

The Indonesian Teachers' School and the Indonesian Literacy School are community empowerment programs in the field of education under the auspices of the Dompot Dhuafa Human Development Institute (LPI DD), which is now Great Edunesia, which is engaged in empowering the community and humanity through the management of zakat, infaq, sedekah, and waqf funds, as well as other social funds (Shiddiq & Khikmawati, 2022). The Indonesian Teachers' School or SGI is a teacher capacity development program that aims to improve the pedagogical competence, leadership, and professionalism of teachers, especially in underdeveloped and marginalized areas (Shofa & Machali, 2017). Since its inception, the Indonesian Teachers' School (SGI) has placed the concept of teacher leadership at the core of every program it implements. Teacher leadership is understood as the ability of an educator to present innovative ideas that can drive positive change, starting from the classroom as the smallest scope of educational transformation (SGI, 2025).

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Literacy School (SLI) is an initiative that emphasizes strengthening a culture of literacy across all educational settings, encompassing formal, informal, and non-formal channels. This program aims to improve the quality of human resources through a comprehensive literacy approach. One form of implementation is through ongoing training and mentoring for school principals in a systematic and planned manner to ensure consistent and effective program implementation in the field. The SLI program also maximizes the function of school libraries as learning resource centers with the hope of encouraging the growth of a culture of literacy among students. In addition, community empowerment is also a crucial aspect in supporting literacy needs, realized through strengthening the role of Community Reading Gardens (TBM) in the program's target areas (SLI, 2025).

Women's empowerment is a strategic issue that continues to be a focus in sustainable development, particularly through education as an instrument of social transformation. In this context, the role of social institutions becomes increasingly significant because they can reach various levels of society and bridge access to equitable education. To strengthen the conceptual foundation and emphasize the urgency of this study, it is necessary to first examine various previous studies that examine the contribution of social institutions in supporting women's empowerment programs through education.

Research by Youssef (2020) analyzed the role of social service institutions in empowering women in the United Arab Emirates. According to him, women's empowerment is a key factor in driving a country's progress, with equal rights being a fundamental foundation for social and economic development. In the study, 60 respondents in the UAE from three social welfare organizations were randomly selected. The results showed that women from various backgrounds, including nationality, marital status, education level, age, and workplace, enjoyed equal access and opportunities. Respondents also expressed positive views regarding the fairness of the distribution of rights and rewards in their workplaces. Youssef recommended the need for further, more in-depth research on the role of social service institutions in advocating for women's and children's

rights in the UAE.

Furthermore, Misasi & Ngoma's (2023) study examined the role of universities in the socio-economic empowerment of women at the University of Livingstonia, Malawi. In many parts of Africa, including Malawi, women have historically been marginalized in social roles that limit their active contributions to community development. Thematic analysis results indicate that the University of Livingstonia plays an active role in increasing women's economic independence by providing access to education, loans, and disseminating knowledge to the community. The impact is evident in women's involvement in educational activities, economic enterprises, and broader social contributions. This study emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the contribution of higher education institutions to women's social and economic empowerment.

Furthermore, research conducted by Purnamawati & Utama (2019) also attempted to explore more deeply the issue of women's empowerment and gender equality. Efforts to empower women are a crucial strategy in promoting independence and optimal utilization of their potential. This aims to free women from various limitations, particularly in education and skills, as well as injustice resulting from discriminatory treatment in the political, economic, socio-cultural, and legal spheres. Furthermore, technological integration through increased access to education, skills training, and the use of appropriate and innovative technology is also necessary to support women's participation in the development process.

Furthermore, research by Mehdi et al. (2022) examined the impact of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) on women's empowerment in Pakistan. Findings indicate that the social welfare program, Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), significantly contributes to the empowerment of underprivileged women. Through a quantitative approach and regression analysis of 300 respondents in Khairpur, they found that BISP had a positive impact on improving living standards (35%), poverty alleviation strategies (29%), and social security (24%). Therefore, the Pakistani government is expected to design more strategic and inclusive initiatives to strengthen women's empowerment while developing programs free from gender discrimination to support comprehensive community empowerment.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research method adopted a qualitative approach with a focus on case studies to explore the role of social institutions in implementing women's empowerment in education. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena in a rich and detailed context and to understand the complex interactions between schools and social institutions in depth. Data were collected through a literature review examining relevant theories and previous research, as well as document analysis, including collaboration reports and related policies. In addition, primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with six alumni as respondents, consisting of three each from the Indonesian Literacy School (SLI) and Indonesian Teachers School (SGI) programs from 2022 to 2024. Respondents were selected purposively to ensure they had direct experience with the empowerment programs in question.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques to identify key themes from the collected qualitative data. Validation steps included data

triangulation, peer review, and researcher reflection to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of collaboration between schools and social institutions in the context of basic education and provide relevant policy recommendations to improve the quality of education at that level.

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