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EXAMINING GENDER INEQUALITY THROUGH A LEGAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to examine in depth how gender inequality manifests in the dimensions of Law and Sociology, as well as its implications for the achievement of sustainable development. Her main focus is to analyze the complex interactions between formal legal frameworks and social norms in society, which are often the basis for the sustainability of discriminatory practices. The narrative literature review method was chosen to provide an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of various literatures, allowing the synthesis of previous research findings as well as the identification of knowledge gaps relevant to the topic being studied. The narrative literature review method is very suitable for exploring the complexity of gender inequality through the lens of Law and Sociology, as it allows the tracing of narratives and arguments that develop in a wide body of science. Overall, an in-depth analysis of the existing literature shows that gender inequality has a significant multidimensional impact on various aspects of sustainable development, ranging from economic, social, to environmental. This research explicitly shows that without a fundamental solution to gender disparities, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals will be hampered.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Gender inequality refers to the unequal distribution of power, privileges, and rights based on gender, often legitimized by patriarchal social and cultural norms (Damsar, 2012). These gaps, which can manifest in various aspects of life, ranging from the domestic to the public sphere, fundamentally hinder the social and economic progress of a nation (Nuraeni & Suryono, 2021). Gender inequality is a multidimensional phenomenon that has taken root in the social structure of societies in various parts of the world, reflecting disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making participation between men and women (Martono et al., 2012).

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Although many efforts have been made to address the problem of gender inequality, the fact is that women still often face discrimination or limited access to education, health, employment, and leadership, which significantly limits their ability to actively participate in development (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). Inequality not only creates injustice, but also triggers various complex social problems and hinders the achievement of sustainable development goals holistically (Vinces et al., 2023). A comprehensive understanding of the root causes and manifestations of gender inequality, especially through the lens of Law and Sociology, is an essential prerequisite for formulating effective and transformative policies.

The Legal Perspective offers a normative framework for analyzing regulations, policies, and the implementation of formal justice that often do not fully accommodate the principle of substantive equality (Rasya & Triadi, 2024). Meanwhile, the Sociology perspective allows the identification of social patterns, cultural norms, and power dynamics that shape and perpetuate these inequalities in daily life (Haryanto et al., 2012). This study will specifically explore how legal constructions and sociological norms interact in creating and reproducing gender inequality, especially in Indonesia.

The phenomenon of gender inequality not only impacts individuals, but also macroly on the social and economic stability of a country, making it a crucial issue in the global development agenda. This confirms that failure to achieve gender equality is often the main obstacle to the realization of the ideals of democracy and sustainable social justice (Meo & Boro, 2021). Gender equality has undoubtedly become a universal policy agenda and a rapidly growing movement in various parts of the world, and aims to end positioning, double burden, subordination, marginalization, and violence against women and men (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). However, various studies still show that there are significant gaps in access to justice or representation between social groups, including gender, and are often exacerbated by power dynamics and unequal legal structures (Banna et al., 2025) (Rasya & Triadi, 2024).

Gender inequality is not just a marginal issue, but a structural problem that affects almost every aspect of social, economic, and political life, hindering the full potential of society (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). In the Indonesian context, socioeconomic disparities, including gender inequality, are still a challenge that needs to be seriously addressed, given their widespread impact on various dimensions of life (Ningsih et al., 2024). Gender inequality is increasingly complicated by discriminatory policies, both directly and indirectly, which often do not adequately consider gender perspectives in their formulation (Widiani & Mahfiana, 2023).

Persistent gender gaps limit women's full participation in development, hinder inclusive economic growth, and undermine social cohesion (Martono et al., 2012). Sociological analysis confirms that gender-based hierarchies, as often manifested by law, also perpetuate myths and stereotypes that are detrimental to the position of women in society (Hadiz, 1993). This manifests in the difference in opportunities between men and women to obtain education, health, employment, and public participation, especially in the poor with different priorities for basic needs (Haryanto, 2016).

For example, women often face greater barriers to access to education and health than men, especially in rural areas, which has an impact on the quality of human resources and overall national productivity (Aisy & Aisy, 2023). For example, women in the employment sector still face wage discrimination and lack of representation in leadership positions, even though their contribution to the national economy is significant (Nuraeni & Suryono, 2021) (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). In addition, traditional social perceptions and norms often confine women to the domestic realm only, thus limiting career and educational choices, while strengthening the cycle of inequality in various sectors of life (Harvanto, 2016).

In fact, increasing women's capacity through education or access to decent work is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development, in line with the *Sustainable Development Goals* goal which targets gender equality as one of its main pillars (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). Women's capacity building, as emphasized in various global and national initiatives, is a vital strategy to empower them to be able to play an active role in all development lines towards sustainability (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024) (Nasiruddin et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth how gender inequality is manifested in the dimensions of Law and Sociology, as well as its implications for the achievement of sustainable development. Her main focus is to analyze the complex interactions between formal legal frameworks and social norms in society, which are often the basis for the sustainability of discriminatory practices. Specifically, the research will identify regulatory gaps or legal

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implementation that fail to protect vulnerable groups, as well as analyze how traditional social norms contribute to exacerbating existing conditions of gender injustice (Hasyim et al., 2025) (Haryanto, 2016).

The importance of this research also lies in the effort to understand the social and legal mechanisms underlying the formation and maintenance of gender inequality, especially in the context of gender roles and unequal division of labor, which often limit women's participation in the public and economic sectors (Suave & Oktariani, 2023). This research will present a comprehensive synthesis of relevant literature, highlighting the complex dynamics between formal legal structures and social practices that shape gender experience in Indonesia.

Previous studies on gender inequality have tended to focus on partial analysis, both from the perspective of Law alone and Sociology, without adequate integration between the two (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). In fact, the multidimensional interaction between the normative framework of the law and socio-cultural constructions plays a fundamental role in shaping the reality of gender inequality. This research seeks to fill the gap by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that unites both perspectives in order to produce a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the issue of gender inequality (Haryanto et al., 2012). An interdisciplinary approach allows for the identification of the root causes of inequality that often overlook monodisciplinary analysis, while offering contextual and sustainable policy solutions.

METHOD

The *narrative literature review method* was chosen to provide an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of various literatures, allowing the synthesis of previous research findings as well as the identification of knowledge gaps relevant to the topic being studied. The *narrative literature review* method is very suitable for exploring the complexity of gender inequality through the lens of Law and Sociology, as it allows the tracing of narratives and arguments that develop in a wide body of science. Its advantage lies in its flexibility to integrate diverse theoretical and empirical perspectives, so as to be able to construct a rich and nuanced understanding of how legal and social norms influence each other in perpetuating or challenging gender inequality.

The utilization of narrative approaches facilitates a holistic understanding of how various discourses and findings of previous research have shaped thinking about gender inequality, particularly in its implications for sustainable development. The *narrative literature review* approach also allows researchers to identify common patterns and anomalies in the literature, while highlighting key debates and areas that require further research. This is crucial in order to analyze in depth how positive laws and sociocultural norms interact to shape the complexity of the reality of gender inequality (Dewi et al., 2020).

The data used in this study includes scientific publications, books, research reports, policy documents, and journal articles from various disciplines, especially Law and Sociology, which are relevant to the issues of gender inequality and sustainable development. Literature searches will be carried out systematically through leading academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ, using a number of keywords, such as "gender inequality", "gender law", "gender sociology", "sustainable development", and "gender justice" (Nadirah, 2023).

The inclusion criteria include publications published in the last fifteen years to ensure the relevance and actuality of the findings, as well as publications in Indonesian and English to expand the scope of geographical and linguistic perspectives. The exclusion criteria are applied to screen literature that does not directly address the interaction between law, sociology, and gender inequality, or that focuses on a single case study without adequate theoretical generalizations. The exception ensures that the focus of research remains sharp on the integration of legal and sociological perspectives on gender inequality.

Data collection was carried out by reading, recording, and classifying the literature that had been selected based on the main themes that emerged, such as legal frameworks, social norms, sustainable development implications, and gender power dynamics. Data analysis will use a thematic approach, where information from various sources is synthesized and interpreted to identify existing research patterns, debates, and gaps. This technique involves cross-referencing findings from the study of Law and Sociology to build a coherent argument about the interdependence of the two in shaping gender inequality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Legal Dimension of Gender Inequality

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Within the legal framework, gender inequality is usually manifested through regulations that explicitly or implicitly discriminate, or the implementation of unfair laws due to deep-rooted gender bias in the justice system (Hamdy & Hudri, 2022). This phenomenon is caused by a lack of substantive understanding of gender equality among law enforcers and the limited legal apparatus that comprehensively accommodates the gender dimension in all aspects of life (Haryanto et al., 2012) (Haryanto, 2016). Furthermore, often positive laws fail to reflect complex social dynamics, thus creating a gap between normative idealism and the empirical reality of inequality (Haryanto et al., 2012).

The condition of inequality is exacerbated by cultural resistance and patriarchal legal interpretation, thus ignoring the spirit of equality and justice that should be carried out by various regulations (Martono et al., 2012) (Haryanto, 2016). This is reflected in the fact that there are still many laws and regulations that are not gendersensitive, and even contain gender bias, thus strengthening the structure of inequality in society. Law enforcement also perpetuates inequality when cultural norms of gender bias unconsciously influence judicial or administrative decisions, as often seen in the handling of cases of domestic violence or discrimination in the workplace (Ismaidar & Sumarno, 2023). As a result, women always face complex barriers when seeking to access justice and legal protection, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation or marginalization (Ariyani et al., 2023).

Ironically, despite legislative efforts to promote equality, such as in promotion, gender inequality persists, especially in strategic positions (Luckyto et al., 2021). This suggests that formal regulatory changes alone are not enough to eliminate discriminatory practices that are deeply embedded in social institutions and structures, thus requiring more in-depth interventions at the cultural and structural levels. In addition, the overlap between religious law and positive law often creates ambiguity that worsens the position of women, especially with regard to sensitive issues, such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, where gender-biased interpretations are often legitimized by religious authorities (Haryanto, 2016).

The legal system in many countries often shows how patriarchal structures are internalized in legal norms and their application, even when there are reform efforts (Singh, 2025). For example, while modern laws may guarantee equality of rights, deep-rooted customary practices or traditions often override or undermine these rights, especially in rural areas (Spichiger et al., 2013). This indicates that the existence of a progressive legal framework alone is not enough, if it is not accompanied by fundamental changes in social and cultural norms, which affect its implementation at the local level.

In Indonesia, discrimination and gender inequality are still a serious problem, even placing them among the top three in Southeast Asia, along with Laos and Cambodia, in the gender inequality index (Lakburlawal et al., 2021). The law in Indonesia does not seem to be able to unravel the entanglement of the problem of gender inequality, even in some aspects, it has actually strengthened discriminatory practices. For example, inheritance provisions often provide an unequal portion between men and women, reflecting legal interpretations that are still influenced by traditions and patrilineal norms (Haryanto, 2016). Another example, the issue of domestic violence is still often seen as a private problem whose handling has not fully adopted a gender justice perspective, even though there have been strict regulations (Harkrisnowo, 2021). This shows that there is a gap between the spirit of formal legislation and the reality of implementation in the field, which is still thick with gender bias (Wulandari et al., 2025).

In order to overcome the legal dimension of gender inequality, there is a need for comprehensive legal reform and equality, supported by increasing law enforcement capacity and changing social paradigms to be more inclusive (March, 2024). These efforts include reviewing discriminatory laws and regulations, increasing socialization of gender-sensitive laws, and raising awareness of the importance of gender equality at all levels of society, including law enforcement officials and judicial institutions (Haryanto, 2016). In addition, it is also important to involve civil society or women's organizations in the policy formulation process and monitoring the implementation of the law to ensure that the voices of vulnerable groups are heard and represented fairly.

Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming in every public policy are essential steps to break the cycle of systemic discrimination inherent in the legal dimension of gender inequality. This strategy is expected to accelerate the achievement of gender justice substantially, not only at the normative level, but also includes its practice in various sectors of life (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). This demands the harmonization of the national legal framework with universal human rights standards, especially those contained in the Convention on the Elimination of



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All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in order to ensure comprehensive legal protection for women and children (Hasyim et al., 2025).

Sociological Perspectives on Gender Inequality

From a sociological point of view, gender inequality is not solely understood as a product of law, but rather a complex social construct; rooted in cultural norms, value systems, and socialization practices in society (Haryanto et al., 2012). Patriarchy, as a system of male social domination, is the main affirmation framework in shaping gender hierarchy through the legalization of unequal norms or power relations (Hamdy & Hudri, 2022) (Haryanto, 2016). Patriarchy is reinforced through social institutions, such as the family, education, and mass media, which constantly reproduce and legitimize stereotypical gender roles and social expectations that limit women (Martono et al., 2012).

The patriarchal system intrinsically affects the division of domestic labor, political roles, and access to economic resources, thus creating structural gaps that are difficult to overcome (Sartika et al., 2024). This division of roles based on gender is not natural, but a social construct that can be exchanged and formed by society through values, norms, customs, and prevailing habits (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024). That is why, the struggle to achieve gender equality demands fundamental changes to social and cultural structures that perpetuate male dominance, rather than just individual change.

In this context, feminism emerged as a critical response to gender injustices rooted in patriarchal systems, calling for awareness of the oppression and exploitation of women in both the domestic and public spheres (Wicaksono et al., 2022). The feminist approach highlights how patriarchal ideology is internalized in various aspects of life, ranging from language, media representation, to religious institutions, so as to collectively shape and maintain inequality (Haryanto et al., 2012). Variants of feminism theory offer diverse analytical frameworks, ranging from micro to macro, to understand the origins and ways to address gender inequality (Haryanto et al., 2012).

1) Liberal feminism

Focusing on individual equality through legal and political reforms, assuming that the main barrier for women is discrimination in the existing system (Sukmana et al., 2022). The liberal feminist approach seeks to achieve equality through legislative and policy changes that guarantee equal rights for women as for men, such as equal pay and employment opportunities (Rachman & Febriana, 2024). However, criticism of liberal feminism often highlights its failure to address deeper structural inequalities, which cannot be solved by legal change alone.

2) Radical Feminism

Viewing gender inequality as a direct result of a patriarchal system that is universal and fundamentally oppresses women, demands revolutionary changes to the social structure (Rachman & Febriana, 2024). Radical feminism argues that male control over women is a major problem, so women around the world need to fight against this domination for their freedom (Haryanto et al., 2012). Therefore, the main goal of radical feminism is to dismantle the patriarchal system that prevails in society, because it is the root of the problem of gender inequality.

3) Marxist Feminism

It is believed that the oppression of women is closely related to the capitalist system and class structure, in which women are exploited, both as workers and in the domestic sphere without pay (Stolley, 2005). Socialist feminism then seeks to combine the analysis of class oppression with gender oppression, looking at how capitalism and patriarchy reinforce each other to subjugate women (Haryanto et al., 2012). Marxist feminism strives to achieve gender equality through a radical transformation of economic structures as well as the elimination of private property which is considered the root of exploitation (Haryanto et al., 2012).

4) Postmodern feminism

Challenging the universal narrative of gender and emphasizing the importance of the plurality of women's experiences, rejects the existence of a single truth about women's oppression or liberation. Postmodern feminism seeks to overcome gender inequality by reflecting and deconstructing the understanding of gender that has been shaped by dominant discourse, recognizing that women's identities and experiences are highly variable and contextual.

Furthermore, sociology views gender inequality as a phenomenon that is not limited to individual discrimination, but is a manifestation of a larger social structure; where patterns of power, stratification, and institutions interact with each other to create and maintain disparities between the sexes ($K\alpha\tau\sigma\iota\alpha\mu\pi\sigma\circ\rho\alpha$, 2024). To understand it, of course, it is necessary to trace how gender norms are internalized from an early age through the

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process of socialization, forming the identity and roles expected of individuals based on their gender. The formation of gender identity is, in turn, affecting access to resources, opportunities, and participation in various spheres of social life (Botifar & Friantary, 2021). In order to realize equality, systematic efforts are needed to deconstruct gender stereotypes and promote women's full participation in all aspects of public and private life (Haq & Afad, 2022).

Women's empowerment and the enforcement of women's rights are key strategies in achieving these goals, as emphasized by various feminist movements and international organizations (Afifah & Febriana, 2024). Empowered women will be able to be active agents of change in society, contribute to sustainable development, and even oppose entrenched discriminatory norms. Empowered women are able to drive inclusive or sustainable social transformation, where human rights are universally respected and equal opportunities are available to all (Alviyah et al., 2020).

Implications of Gender Inequality on Sustainable Development

Gender inequality has a broad and profound impact on the achievement of sustainable development goals, hindering progress in various sectors ranging from economic, social, to environmental. Specifically, the obstacles due to gender inequality can be described as follows:

- a) Economic sector, where women's limited access to education, training, and productive resources hinders a country's economic growth potential, strengthens poverty, and widens the gap (Lin & Wang, 2023). In addition, gender inequality also limits women's participation in the formal labour market, resulting in their dominance in the low-wage informal sector as well as limited social protection. In the context of sustainable development, this condition directly weakens the capacity of the community to achieve inclusive and equitable economic welfare.
- b) Social sector, where gender discrimination hinders women's access to health services, education, and political participation, which in turn worsens public health, lowers literacy levels, and weakens democratic governance (Martono et al., 2012). Women's representation in political decision-making, for example, is vital so that public policies are more accommodating and substantive to the interests of all people, including women (Elsi et al., 2022). Without adequate representation, women's specific needs are often overlooked in policy formulation, which exacerbates social inequality (Sukmana, 2016). In relation to sustainable development, the absence of gender equality hinders the formation of a just, inclusive, and empowered society, especially because it limits social capital and collective participation that are essential for comprehensive progress (Ari et al., 2022).
- c) The environmental sector, where gender-discriminatory practices often limit women's role in natural resource management, is almost always the most affected by the climate crisis or environmental degradation (Ari et al., 2022). In fact, women's involvement in sustainable environmental management practices, especially at the community level, has proven to be very powerful in encouraging innovation and effectiveness in natural resource conservation. Thus, addressing gender inequality is not only a moral imperative, but also a fundamental prerequisite for achieving the goals of holistic and transformative sustainable development.

If gender inequality is not addressed, the achievement of the global sustainable development agenda, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, will continue to be significantly hampered, thus hindering progress in various dimensions of social, economic, and environmental life. Therefore, the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in every aspect of development policy planning and implementation is very meaningful to ensure the achievement of fair and sustainable outcomes for all (Ababneh et al., 2025) (Meena, 1992).

The importance of gender equality as a catalyst to achieve a sustainable future for all has been explicitly emphasized in the 2030 Agenda, signaling that this issue is not just a goal, but an essential foundation for global progress (Panda, 2019). This recognition indicates that without women's full participation in decision-making and policy implementation, efforts towards inclusive and sustainable development will be difficult to achieve optimally (Montanari et al., 2023). In fact, many United Nations member states have adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals that place gender equality as a cross-sectoral issue, recognizing that without multidimensional addressing inequality, the Sustainable Development Goals will not be realized (Saha, 2020).

Research shows that gender equality is positively correlated with better outcomes in various other Sustainable Development Goals, although these have not been fully integrated in most of the goals themselves ("Gender Equality:

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The Route to a Better World," 2023). For example, *Goal 5*, which specifically focuses on gender equality, is recognized as a key lever to accelerate progress on a range of other goals, including poverty alleviation, good health, and quality education (Hepp et al., 2019) (Filho et al., 2022). Another example, increasing women's capacity significantly contributes to the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as it enables women to make more informed decisions and actively participate in economic and social development (Rahmadani & Agustina, 2024).

Thus, making gender equality the main focus of development is not just the achievement of human rights, but an absolute strategy to accelerate sustainable and inclusive global progress (Hua & Zhao, 2024). Gender equality education from an early age is undoubtedly a crucial element to form a just and sustainable society in the future, in line with the argument that investment in such education is an investment in a brighter future (Sugitanata & Rahmanita, 2024). Only through the realization of comprehensive gender equality can the goals of sustainable development be truly achieved holistically; forming the foundation of a just, inclusive, and sustainable society (Sugitanata & Rahmanita, 2024).

CONCLUSION

From the dimensions of Law and Sociology, the discussion has highlighted how gender inequality is manifested in various social and legal structures, forming complex patterns of domination and subordination. Legal aspects often fail to provide an adequate foundation to ensure equal rights, as the interpretation and implementation of laws are often still influenced by gender bias and patriarchal cultural norms. Meanwhile, the sociological aspect highlights how gender social construction shapes unbalanced roles, expectations, and distribution of power in society, which is reflected in the inequality of access to resources, opportunities, and representation.

Overall, an in-depth analysis of the existing literature shows that gender inequality has a significant multidimensional impact on various aspects of sustainable development, ranging from economic, social, to environmental. This research explicitly shows that without a fundamental solution to gender disparities, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals will be hampered, as Goal 5 contributes to the achievement of the overall agenda. This study underlines the importance of gender equality education from an early age as a fundamental step to form a generation that has a critical understanding of the role of gender in society. In addition, women's empowerment in all sectors of life is also the key to achieving fair and sustainable development.

This research produces several policy recommendations based on empirical and analytical findings, with the aim of strengthening the implementation of gender equality in the framework of sustainable development.

- a. Integration of Gender Perspectives in Policy Formulation
 Governments and relevant agencies should adopt policy frameworks that explicitly include a gender
 perspective in every stage of development policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation; Especially
 in crucial sectors, such as the economy, education, health, and the environment.
- b. Strengthening the Legal and Institutional Framework Comprehensive regulatory reforms are needed to address gender discrimination, including a review of laws that are patriarchal or restrictive of women's rights, as well as strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies to be more responsive to gender issues.
- c. Improving Education and Public Awareness

 Massive education programs on gender equality need to be implemented from primary to tertiary education levels, as well as ongoing public awareness campaigns to change social and cultural norms that support inequality.
 - Women's Empowerment Women's economic, social, and political empowerment needs to be comprehensively improved to support sustainable development in all areas of life. Empowerment can be done through vocational training programs, entrepreneurship support, and increased representation in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors.

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