

Gender Inequality in Economic Participation: A Socio-Economic Analysis in Indonesia

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Abstract

This research addresses gender inequality in economic participation in Indonesia, an issue that poses a barrier to sustainable development and social equality. Although there has been an increase in women's participation in the economic sector, women's labor participation rate is still significantly lower than men's, with an average labor participation rate of 83-84% for men and only 50-53% for women (BPS, 2018-2023). Various social and structural barriers, including patriarchal culture and the burden of domestic responsibilities, limit women's role in the public sector. This study uses descriptive analysis to evaluate trends and patterns of gender inequality in the Indonesian economy from 2018 to 2023, utilizing data from BPS. The findings show that gender inequality in economic participation disadvantages women and slows national economic growth. With more inclusive policies, Indonesia can correct this imbalance and increase its potential productivity and economic competitiveness.

Keywords: Gender Inequality; Labor Participation; Socio-Economic

1. Introduction

Gender inequality in economic participation in Indonesia is a serious challenge that affects the progress of sustainable development and the achievement of social equality. Despite the increase in women's participation in the economy, women's labor force participation rate is still significantly lagging behind men's. The Labor Force Participation Rate (TPAK) in Indonesia shows that there is a significant inequality between women and men. The average male TPAK is recorded at around 83-84%, while the female TPAK is around 50-53%. This shows that about half of working-age women are not involved in the labor force compared to men, and there are barriers for women to be fully involved in the job market, which is influenced by various socio-cultural and economic factors (BPS, 2018-2023). This inequality not only harms women, but also has an impact on national economic performance, considering that women's productive potential has not been fully exploited. Gender inequality is not only limited to work participation rates, but also includes aspects such as lower wages for comparable jobs, limited access to leadership positions, and job segregation in more informal and low-income sectors for women (Arifin, 2018; Renie, 2019)

Research also shows that structural barriers, such as a strong patriarchal culture, limit women from taking an active role in the public sphere (Arifin, 2018; Deris et al., 2022). The patriarchal culture that is still thick causes gender roles that limit women from taking roles in the public sphere, including the economy (Anto et al., 2023). Most women are still burdened with greater domestic responsibilities, such as taking care of children and households, so their time and energy to participate in the formal economy are limited (Romadhon, 2024; Utaminingsih, 2024). Gaps in access to education, training, and technology also widen the inequality gap. Many



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women, especially in rural areas, do not have the opportunity to access higher education or relevant skills training, which ultimately affects their competitiveness in the job market (Zuhriyah, 2018; Jatningsih, 2021).

This inequality is further exacerbated by the wage gap between men and women. Based on a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO), there is a significant inequality in the wages received by women compared to men for the same type of work (Silalahi & Sare, 2023). This discrimination in remuneration is largely due to gender stereotypes that consider women as secondary breadwinners. In many workplaces, women are often placed in low-status jobs with smaller remuneration levels, while jobs with higher remuneration tend to be dominated by men.

Gender inequality in economic participation has an impact on the quality of life of women and their families, and also slows down the rate of national economic growth. Gender inequality in economic participation has an impact on the quality of life of women, their families, and also slows down the rate of national economic growth followed by increased welfare. The benefits that can be felt for women themselves are a better quality of life from all aspects (BKF, 2021). The World Bank revealed that if gender inequality in the economy can be minimized, then Indonesia's GDP has the potential to increase significantly. Increasing women's participation in the workforce will result in a larger and more diverse workforce, which can ultimately increase national economic productivity and competitiveness on the global stage (World Bank, 2024).

Therefore, it is important to formulate proactive policies in increasing women's economic participation. The government and the private sector need to work together to create an inclusive work environment, such as by providing supporting facilities, special training programs, and ensuring policies that ensure remuneration equality. Another urgent effort is to address gender stereotypes through education and public campaigns to change people's views on the role of women in the world of work. With these steps, it is hoped that Indonesia will be able to build a fairer, more prosperous, and sustainable economy

2. Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive analysis method to describe the condition of gender inequality in economic participation in Indonesia. The descriptive analysis was chosen to provide insight into trends and patterns of gender inequality in various aspects of the economy, education, and health in the period from 2018 to 2023. The data used in this study is secondary data sourced from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). Some of the main indicators analyzed include the Women's Labor Force Participation Rate (TPAK) and the average length of schooling. This indicator is compared with the same data in men to understand the inequality that occurs.

The collected data is then presented in the form of descriptive statistics such as averages, percentages, and ratios to facilitate pattern identification. The results will be visualized in graphs and tables to clarify the changes in gender inequality from year to year and differences between provinces. This step allows research to identify inequality variations, as well as understand the factors that may influence those differences, such as local policies or specific socio-economic factors. By interpreting these results, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the condition of gender inequality in Indonesia and provide a basis for policymakers to determine more effective policies in reducing gender inequality in various economic and social sectors.

3. Results

A. Labor Force Participation Rate

Table 1. Average Labor Force Participation Rate (TPAK) in 2018-2023

No.	Year	Man	Woman
1.	2018	84,54	58,62
2.	2019	82,59	55,51
3.	2020	71,20	61,26
4.	2021	85,21	63,63
5.	2022	86,7	58,84
6.	2023	86,97	60,18

Source: BPS Indonesia (2018-2023)

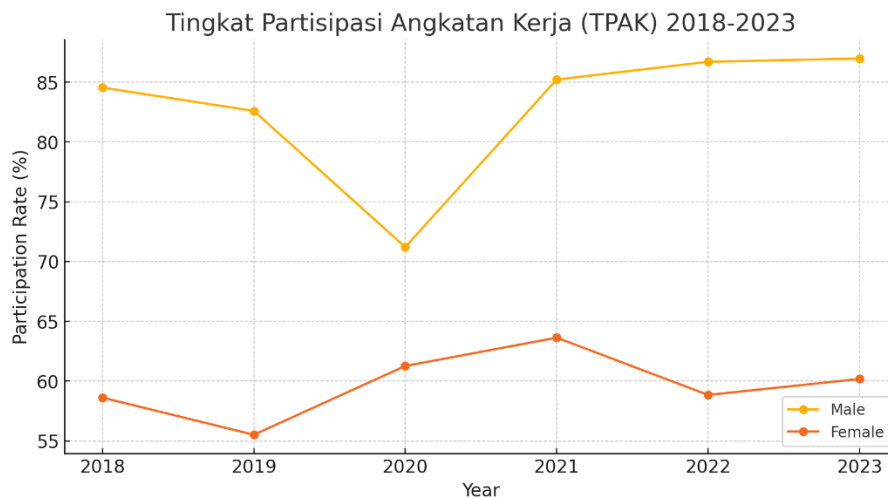


Figure 1. TPAK chart from 2018-2023

Based on data on the labor force participation rate from 2018 to 2023, it can be seen that the male labor force participation rate is consistently higher than that of women. In 2018, male participation was recorded at 84.54% while female participation only reached 58.62%. Despite fluctuations every year, the same pattern continues until 2023, where male participation reaches 86.97% and female participation reaches 60.18%. This shows that there is a stable participation gap between the two genders.

Interestingly, although there has been an increase in women's work participation in several years such as 2021 and 2023, this figure is still lower than that of men. Increased participation in certain years may be related to policies or programs that support women to work or increase their access to the job market. The continuation of this pattern shows that there is a need for further policies to encourage women's participation in the labor force to reach a more equal level with men, both through skills training, the provision of family support facilities, and the elimination of social barriers that prevent women from participating in the world of work to the fullest.

Average Length of School

Table 2. Average School Length (RLS) in 2018-2023

No.	Tahun	Laki-laki	Perempuan
1.	2018	8,6 tahun	7,6 tahun
2.	2019	8,7 tahun	7,8 tahun
3.	2020	8,8 tahun	7,9 tahun
4.	2021	8,9 tahun	8,9 tahun
5.	2022	8,9 tahun	8,2 tahun
6.	2023	9 tahun	8,3 tahun

Source: BPS Indonesia (2018-2023)

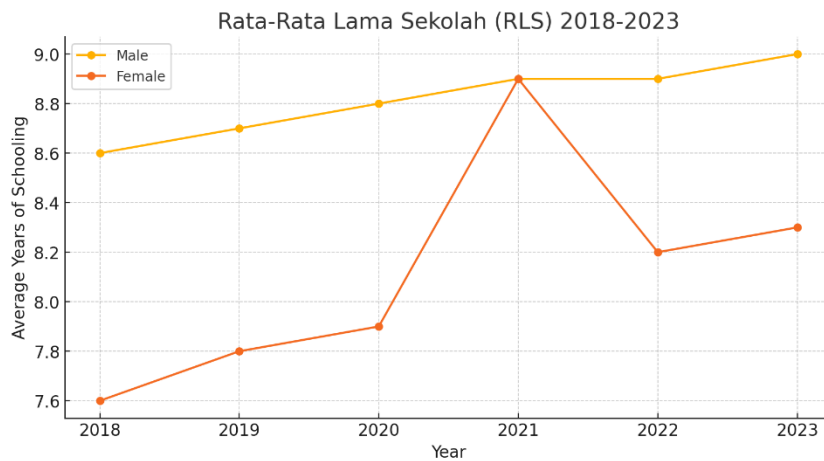


Figure 2. RLS chart from 2018-2023

Based on the table, it is known that from 2018 to 2023, the average length of schooling shows a consistent increase for both genders, which indicates progress in access and quality of education. The largest surge occurred in 2022, with significant growth of 4.25% for men and 6.98% for women. This indicates a large increase in educational participation, which may be related to new, better education policies or programs. In 2023, although the growth was not as large as the previous year, the average length of schooling still increased with a growth of 0.84% for boys and 1.52% for girls, showing stability in a positive trend. Overall, this data reflects successful efforts to improve access to education in Indonesia, especially for women, which has shown a significant increase in recent years.

4. Discussion

The TPAK Gap

These differences reflect the influence of several factors, such as different social roles for men and women, family responsibilities, and social barriers that still prevent women from accessing work equally. In many regions, women still face barriers to access to employment, such as social expectations to take care of households or difficulties in obtaining equal employment. In addition, the type of work available and the level of education or training women receive also affect their participation rate in the labor market.

The social roles of men and women are still differentiated by social norms and constructions that have taken root in the culture of society. Men are generally considered the main breadwinners and leaders in the family, while women are more often identified with domestic roles such as taking care of the household and raising children (Anto et al., 2023). This difference in roles not only limits women's space in the public world, but also places a double burden on them, especially when women also play a role as the backbone of the family economy (Septari et al., 2022). This dual responsibility creates a challenge for women in balancing professional and domestic roles, where they are often faced with a dilemma between career and family responsibilities (Parawansa, 2002)

In addition, social barriers are still strong affecting women's access to an equal world of work. Gender-based discrimination, stereotypes that underestimate women's leadership capacity, and unbalanced domestic responsibilities are barriers for women to achieve the same position as men (Baiduri et al., 2023). The concept of

a "*glass ceiling*" remains a significant obstacle, limiting women from occupying the highest leadership positions even if they have adequate qualifications. As a result, wage inequality and women's representation in strategic positions are still a problem that requires serious attention (Baiduri et al., 2023).

It is important to drive structural and social change to overcome these barriers. Gender equality must be promoted through policies that support women's roles in the workplace, as well as more equitable division of family responsibilities between men and women (Septari et al., 2022). Thus, women can play a more equal role in society and the world of work without having to be limited by rigid social norms. Awareness of the importance of equality also needs to be continuously increased through education and public campaigns (Baiduri et al., 2023).

Average School Length Gap

In 2021, the gender gap in average length of schooling disappeared, reflecting equality in access to education. However, in 2022 and 2023, a slight gap reappeared, although the level of education for women continued to progress. The type of work available and the level of education or training women receive also affect their participation rates in the labor market.

Education levels have a significant influence on women's participation in the labor market. The higher the level of education a woman gets, the greater their chances of being involved in the formal sector with better salaries, higher positions, and more stable career guarantees. Women who have higher education tend to be more able to compete in the public and private sectors, and have easier access to jobs in the field of technology and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) industries (Nofianti, 2016).

In contrast, women with lower levels of education are often trapped in the informal sector with uncertain incomes, flexible working hours, and lack of access to social protection. Research also shows that the gender gap in the workplace can be narrowed by increasing women's access to higher education, which in turn affects their involvement in high-tech industries and strategic jobs (Suarmini, 2018). Women's participation in the labor market is often hampered by gender perceptions and stereotypes that still view certain sectors as "male domains". However, data suggest that education can be key to breaking these stereotypes and increasing women's representation in influential jobs (Maharani, 2023).

5. Conclusion

Gender inequality in economic participation in Indonesia still shows significant gaps, especially in the level of labor force participation and access to leadership positions. Social factors, such as patriarchal culture and unbalanced domestic division of responsibilities, affect women's involvement in the formal sector. Data shows that increasing women's participation in the workforce can have a positive impact on the national economy, including the potential for GDP increase. Therefore, proactive policies are needed to increase women's participation, both through skills training, the provision of family support facilities, and public campaigns to change gender stereotypes. With these measures, it is hoped that gender inequality in economic participation can be reduced, thus allowing women to contribute optimally and equally to national economic development.

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