



Gender Bias and Structural Injustice in the Labor Market: Discrimination Against Single Men amid Increasing Female Labor Participation

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Abstract: Shifts in gender roles within local labor markets have generated unequal access to employment, giving rise to forms of social injustice manifested in discrimination against single male workers, particularly in rural settings. This article examines how the increasing labor participation of women in Rumbia Subdistrict, Central Lampung Regency, interacts with patriarchal social constructions and informal labor practices, thereby producing patterns of labor exclusion based on gender and marital status. The study aims to: (1) identify the forms of employment discrimination experienced by single men; (2) analyze the structural roots of such injustice; and (3) formulate a problem-solving approach to gender justice. This research employs an implementative qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Data sources include female workers, single male job seekers, community leaders, village officials, and local business actors. Data were analyzed using the *mubādalāh* perspective as a supporting theoretical framework, which emphasizes principles of reciprocity, mutuality, and gender equality in social relations. The findings indicate that discrimination against single men constitutes a product of patriarchy-based structural injustice, which simultaneously constrains women's access to equitable employment opportunities. This dynamic creates a paradox of gender equality within local labor practices. Academically, this study contributes to gender and labor studies by integrating a progressive Islamic perspective (*mubādalāh*) into the analysis of social injustice. From a policy perspective, the article recommends the formulation of non-discriminatory local labor policies, the strengthening of community-based gender education, and the reformulation of village-level labor regulations to foster a fair and inclusive employment system amid ongoing transformations in gender roles.

Keywords: Female Workers; Single Men; *Mubādalāh*; Employment Opportunities; Gender Justice

Introduction

Labor discourse in Indonesia has predominantly positioned women as the primary group experiencing structural discrimination in the labor market (Granberg et al., 2020). Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) indicate that in 2023 the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) stood at 54.52%, significantly lower than that of men, which reached 84.26%. This gap is commonly explained through patriarchal cultural norms, the gendered division of domestic labor, and women's limited access to decent employment opportunities (Sakina, 2024). However, the increasing participation of

women in the labor force in recent years has also generated new patterns of inequality that remain underexplored, particularly at the local level (Lain, 2019).

At the national level, the female labor force participation rate increased to 55.41% in 2024 (BPS). In several rural areas, this trend has led to shifts in labor composition, especially within the agricultural and informal trade sectors. Preliminary findings in Rumbia Subdistrict, Central Lampung Regency, reveal the emergence of employment preferences based on gender and marital status, where single men experience restricted access to work due to shrinking job opportunities and changing informal recruitment practices (Newman, 2014). This phenomenon indicates the presence of discrimination and social injustice against single men as a group directly affected by transformations in local labor structures (Vick, 2017).

Unlike discrimination against women which has been extensively examined in relation to wage gaps, promotion barriers, and workplace harassment scholarly attention to discrimination against single men in the labor market remains very limited. Paradoxically, patriarchal norms that traditionally position men as primary breadwinners may produce new exclusionary mechanisms as women increasingly occupy public employment spaces (Detilleux & Deschacht, 2024). In this context, unmarried status is often socially constructed as an indicator of lower stability and social responsibility, thereby influencing hiring preferences (Birkelund et al., 2022). This condition demonstrates that gender injustice is not unidirectional, but rather structural and contextual, shaped by configurations of social norms, power relations, and localized labor practices (Lee & Kang, 2025).

The implications of this condition extend beyond restricted employment access for single men to broader social consequences, including rising unemployment among the productive-age population, economic vulnerability among non-family households, and potential social tensions arising from unequal job competition. When labor discrimination persists structurally, the labor market ceases to function as an instrument of social justice and instead reproduces inequalities based on gender and marital status. This underscores the need to approach labor issues not merely from an economic perspective, but also through the lens of social justice and the ethics of gender relations.

These vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by the socio-environmental context of Sumatra, which in recent years has frequently experienced large-scale natural disasters such as floods and landslides. Data from the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) indicate that during 2023–2024, Sumatra was among the regions with the highest number of disaster victims in Indonesia, with millions affected and thousands losing their livelihoods due to damage to agricultural sectors and local economies (BNPB, 2024). The impacts of such disasters extend beyond physical destruction, contributing to the contraction of rural labor markets and intensifying discriminatory recruitment practices, particularly against groups deemed less socially prioritized, including single men.

While previous studies have addressed various dimensions of labor and gender inequality, notable limitations persist. Existing research has largely focused on women as the primary subjects of labor discrimination, rarely considering discrimination against men in specific social contexts. Studies on women's labor participation often emphasize economic empowerment without assessing unintended structural consequences for single men. Rural labor studies tend to prioritize poverty and migration issues, overlooking the intersection of gender and marital status as mechanisms of labor exclusion. Post-disaster labor research primarily examines macroeconomic recovery, with limited attention to localized discriminatory practices.

Furthermore, studies employing *mubādalāh* as a progressive Islamic approach emphasizing reciprocity and gender justice remain concentrated in the domains of family law and domestic relations, with minimal application to public-sector issues such as employment.

Accordingly, a clear research gap emerges: there is a lack of comprehensive studies integrating the analysis of discrimination against single men with the *mubādalāh* perspective within the context of local labor markets, particularly in rural areas undergoing social and economic transformation. This article offers a novel contribution by positioning *mubādalāh* as a critical analytical framework that emphasizes reciprocity, mutual justice, and gender equality in social and economic relations. Through this approach, labor discrimination is understood not merely as a technical labor market issue, but as an ethical and structural problem that necessitates the reconstruction of labor policies and practices toward greater fairness and inclusivity. Academically, this study advances gender scholarship by shifting the analytical focus from a singular narrative of women as victims toward a structural understanding of gender injustice that also affects single men, using *mubādalāh* in an applied and contextual manner. Practically, the findings are expected to inform the formulation of non-discriminatory and gender-just local labor policies.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to analyze the forms, mechanisms, and driving factors of discrimination against single male workers in Rumbia Subdistrict, Central Lampung Regency, and to examine how the *mubādalāh* approach can be employed to formulate an inclusive framework of labor justice.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach, aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of social phenomena based on the perspectives and lived experiences of the research participants. This approach was selected because it enables the exploration of complex social dynamics, particularly in mapping the impact of the increasing number of female workers on employment opportunities for single men within local communities, as well as in analyzing gender relations through the lens of reciprocity as articulated in the *mubādalāh* approach.

The research was conducted in Rumbia Subdistrict, Central Lampung Regency, which was purposively selected due to a significant increase in women's participation in both formal and informal labor sectors. This shift has affected the local social and economic structure, particularly for single men who encounter increasing difficulty in securing stable employment. The research subjects included unemployed single men, employed women (in both formal and informal sectors), community leaders, religious leaders, and representatives of village-level governmental institutions.

Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized in this study. Primary data were obtained from carefully selected informants using a snowball sampling technique through a combination of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and direct field observations. Secondary data were collected from official documents such as labor statistics reports issued by Statistics Indonesia (BPS), village administrative records, and relevant scholarly articles and academic journals.

Data collection was carried out using several techniques: (1) in-depth interviews with key informants to obtain detailed qualitative data; (2) participant observation to directly capture social dynamics in the field; and (3) documentation of secondary data and field notes to support the main findings. A flexible interview guide was employed to allow informants' narratives to develop naturally in accordance with their social contexts.

Data credibility was ensured through triangulation of both sources and methods. Method triangulation was conducted by cross-validating findings from interviews, observations, and documentation, while source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from different categories of informants and documentary sources. In addition, member checking was carried out by seeking confirmation from selected key informants regarding preliminary findings. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of: (1) data reduction through the selection and organization of data into salient categories; (2) data display in the form of thematic narratives to facilitate interpretation; and (3) conclusion drawing by integrating empirical findings with the *mubādalāh* theoretical framework and relevant prior studies. The analytical process was conducted iteratively from the initial stage of data collection through to the final stage of manuscript preparation.

Findings/Results

Increasing Female Labor Force Participation

Recent data from Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik* BPS) indicate that the female labor force participation rate (FLFPR) in Indonesia has continued to rise gradually, while the male labor force participation rate (MLFPR) has remained relatively stable at a high level. Nevertheless, the participation gap between men and women remains substantial. In February 2024, the FLFPR was recorded at 55.41%, representing an increase of approximately one percentage point compared to February 2023. During the same period, the MLFPR reached around 84.02%, leaving a participation gap of nearly 30 percentage points between men and women (GoodStats Data).

By August 2024, the national labor force participation rate (LFPR) reached 70.63%. Disaggregated by gender, the MLFPR stood at 84.66%, while the FLFPR reached 56.42%. These figures confirm a persistent pattern: men continue to dominate both formal and informal economic activities, while women demonstrate a gradual upward trend in labor participation but remain proportionally underrepresented (BPS API).

In February 2025, the national LFPR was recorded at 70.60%, increasing by 0.80 percentage points compared to February 2024. By gender, the MLFPR reached 84.34%, while the FLFPR rose to 56.70%. Compared to August 2024, female participation increased slightly (from 56.42% to 56.70%), whereas male participation declined marginally (from 84.66% to 84.34%). This trend indicates a modest narrowing of the gender participation gap, although the disparity remains pronounced (BPS API).

Data from August 2025 show that the national LFPR stood at 70.59%, slightly lower than in August 2024 (70.63%), despite continued growth in the labor force and the number of employed persons. The open unemployment rate declined to 4.85% in August 2025, lower than in the previous year. BPS records further indicate a slight decline in male participation alongside a modest increase in female participation compared to August 2024 (GoodStats; *Antara News*). These developments can be summarized in the following table:

Tabel 1. Trends in Indonesia’s Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) by Gender, 2024–2025”

Year & Month	Total LFPR (%)	Male LFPR (%)	Female LFPR (%)	Key Remarks
Aug 2024	70.63	84.66	56.42	High national participation; men remain dominant while

				female increases API)	participation gradually (BPS API)
Feb 2025	70.60	84.34	56.70	LFPR increased by 0.80 points from Feb 2024; gender gap narrowed slightly (BPS API)	
Aug 2025	70.59	–	–	Slight decline in total LFPR; BPS notes declining male and marginally increasing female participation (GoodStats)	

Factually, the 2024–2025 data reveal three important trends. First, the female labor force participation rate continues to increase, both relative to 2023 and across intra-year periods (February–August), although the annual growth remains modest (GoodStats Data). Second, male participation consistently remains above 84%, with only minor fluctuations, resulting in a persistent gender participation gap of approximately 27–29 percentage points (BPS API). Third, in 2025, the decline in the open unemployment rate and the increase in total employment indicate an overall improvement in national labor market conditions, although equitable access to employment across genders remains an unresolved challenge (GoodStats; *Brief Indonesia*).

This national context is essential as a backdrop for local-level analysis, particularly in Rumbia Subdistrict. It provides a macro-level framework for examining how the aggregate increase in female labor force participation may intersect with and potentially exacerbate forms of injustice experienced by single men within local labor market structures.

Profile of Female Workers in Rumbia Subdistrict

Based on field observations and interviews conducted in Rumbia Subdistrict, women are involved in a wide range of occupations across both informal and formal sectors. In the informal sector, women commonly work as market vendors, cassava peeling laborers, warehouse workers or agricultural processing workers, and small shop operators. In the formal sector, some women are employed as administrative staff in cooperatives, village administrative officers, and contract or honorary employees in educational and health institutions.

In general, female workers in Rumbia Subdistrict are within the productive age range and possess educational backgrounds ranging from primary to secondary education, with a small proportion having attained higher education. Their marital status varies; however, the majority are married women who perform dual roles as housewives and supplementary income earners for their households.

Table 2. Summary Profile of Female Workers in Rumbia Subdistrict

Aspect	Field Findings
Main employment sectors	Market vendors, cassava peeling laborers, warehouse/agricultural processing workers, small shop operators, cooperative staff, village administrators, honorary staff in schools and public health centers

Age group	Predominantly productive age (approximately 20–45 years)
Education level	Mostly primary to senior secondary school graduates; a small proportion hold Diploma or Bachelor's degrees
Marital status	Predominantly married; includes unmarried women and widows
Work patterns	Flexible working hours, largely adjusted to children's school schedules and domestic responsibilities
Role in household economy	Supplementing household income; in some cases serving as the primary economic provider
Workplace location	Mostly within the village/subdistrict (local markets, processing facilities, cooperatives, small shops)

Several informant testimonies illustrate these work patterns concretely. One informant, Mrs. S (38 years old), a cassava peeling laborer who has worked in this occupation for several years, explained that the job initially served as occasional assistance but later became a steady source of household income: *“At first, I only helped occasionally, but over time it became a regular job because the work was always needed. I am also glad that I can help my husband so our children's school needs can be met.”*

Another informant, Ms. Y (27 years old), an unmarried woman working as an administrative staff member at a cooperative, emphasized that there is growing demand for female workers in Rumbia, particularly those with basic administrative and computer skills: *“For women, it is now easier to find work, especially if you have basic computer or accounting skills. Many cooperatives and shops are looking for female employees.”*

Meanwhile, Mrs. T (45 years old), a widow who manages a small grocery shop near her home, described how her microenterprise has become her primary means of livelihood: *“I cannot depend on my family all the time. So, I run my own small shop. Alhamdulillah, it is enough to meet my daily needs.”*

Beyond demographic characteristics and occupational types, field data also reveal the primary motivations driving women's participation in paid work in Rumbia Subdistrict. Based on the categorization of informants' statements, these motivations can be classified into several key themes, which are discussed in the following section.

Table 3. Categories of Women's Motivation to Work in Rumbia Subdistrict

Motivation Category	Empirical Description from the Field	Illustrative Informant Examples
Household economic needs	Supplementing household income; meeting daily expenses, children's education costs, and urgent financial needs	Mrs. S and several housewives working in factories and local markets
Financial independence	The desire not to rely entirely on husbands or family members, particularly among widows and unmarried women	Mrs. T (widow and small shop owner)
Income stability	Efforts to maintain relatively stable household income when husbands' earnings are uncertain	Women working in cassava

		warehouses/processing facilities
Self-actualization and social recognition	The desire to feel valued, to assume roles beyond the domestic sphere, and to gain social recognition as independent individuals	Unmarried and married women employed in the formal sector

One female informant employed at a cassava processing warehouse explained her economic motivation in direct terms: *“If we depend only on my husband, sometimes we can eat, sometimes we cannot. I work so that the household can continue and the children can go to school.”*

Personal motivations related to self-esteem and recognition also emerged clearly in another informant’s statement: *“I feel valued when I can be independent. It is not only about helping my family, but also about having a role outside the home.”*

Based on these findings, it can be summarized that women in Rumbia Subdistrict:

1. Are engaged across various local employment sectors, with a strong concentration in the informal sector;
2. Play a significant economic role in sustaining or supplementing household income; and
3. Are motivated not only by economic necessity, but also by aspirations for financial independence and self-actualization.

This profile provides an empirical backdrop for understanding women’s positions in the local labor market. It further contextualizes how shifts in labor force composition intersect with employment opportunities and forms of injustice experienced by single men, which are discussed in the following section.

Impacts on Employment Opportunities for Single Men

The large-scale entry of women into the local labor market in Rumbia Subdistrict, particularly in low- to medium-skilled sectors such as cassava processing factories, retail shops, cooperatives, and small-scale retail businesses, has had a direct impact on employment opportunities for single men. Based on field observations and interviews, several positions that were previously dominated by men have gradually become female-dominated, while job applications submitted by single men are more frequently left without response.

Several interviewed single men described similar experiences: they had submitted applications to various workplaces in Rumbia but were rarely invited for interviews or further selection, while women with comparable qualifications were more likely to be hired. One informant, R (26 years old), stated: *“We have submitted applications many times, but those who get called are women. They say women work more neatly and complain less about wages.”*

This pattern emerged repeatedly in the accounts of other single male informants. They reported that employers often verbally expressed preferences for female workers, particularly for positions such as cashiers, shop attendants, and administrative staff in cooperatives. To illustrate the severity and scope of the issue, field findings on the impact of gender bias on employment opportunities for single men can be summarized as follows.

Table 4. Impact of Gender Bias on Employment Opportunities for Single Men in Rumbia Subdistrict

Impact Dimension	Empirical Field Findings	Indication of Severity (Based on Data Patterns)
Restricted access	Single men repeatedly submitted applications to factories, shops,	Recurrently experienced by multiple informants; emerged

stable employment	and cooperatives but were rarely contacted; equivalent positions were filled by women with similar educational qualifications.	as a primary concern in nearly all interviews with single men.
Shift toward informal and unstable work	Single men who failed to secure stable jobs moved into casual labor (daily laborers, freelance work, unpaid family assistance).	A common pattern among informants; job instability was acknowledged as an obstacle to future planning.
Declining and uncertain income	Earnings from casual work were irregular, with periods of no income at all, resulting in dependence on parents or relatives.	Frequently described as “insufficient” to meet personal needs; in some cases, informants were unable to contribute to household finances.
Economic dependence on family of origin	Several single men continued to live with their parents and relied on household support due to the absence of stable personal income.	Identified as a source of family tension; parents expressed concerns about sons’ lack of economic independence.
Delayed attainment of independence and life planning	Single men reported postponing marriage or independent living due to the absence of stable employment and sufficient income.	Recurrent theme; stable employment was viewed as a prerequisite for marriage, and joblessness prolonged economic dependency.
Social pressure and feelings of shame	Single male informants reported feelings of embarrassment when compared to women who were already employed and earning income, both within families and in the broader community.	Social pressure was perceived as intense; some informants described feeling “useless” or “not yet somebody” due to the lack of stable employment.

Based on the categorization of interview data, the forms of injustice experienced by single men can be more specifically identified in relation to the underlying causal factors and the operational mechanisms of gender bias within the local labor market, as outlined below.

Table 5. Relationship between Forms of Injustice, Causal Factors, and the Operation of Gender Bias

Forms of Injustice Affecting Single Men	Causal Factors Identified in Field Data	Operation of Gender Bias within the Local Labor Market
Single men are excluded from relatively stable positions (cashiers, cooperative staff, factory workers)	Employers perceive women as more meticulous, patient, and manageable; women are considered more willing to accept lower wages.	Bias emerges at the recruitment stage: although job vacancies do not always explicitly specify gender requirements, female applicants are prioritized in practice for interviews and hiring.
Single men are concentrated in casual	The abundant availability of “work-ready” female labor in close proximity to	Bias operates through employers’ practical preferences: when many

and employment	seasonal	business locations reduces employers' incentives to recruit men.	women apply, single men are treated as secondary options or reserved for physically demanding and unstable jobs.
Limited access to skill development and work experience		Unemployed or casually employed single men lack opportunities to accumulate continuous formal work experience.	Initial bias in access to employment results in blocked pathways for promotion or training; women who secure entry-level positions gain easier access to additional work experience.
Stigmatization "unsuccessful" heightened pressure	as and family	Local cultural norms continue to position men as primary breadwinners, despite their limited access to adequate employment opportunities.	Gender bias produces a mismatch between social expectations and labor market realities: men are expected to provide, yet more advantageous employment opportunities are more accessible to women.

From the above analysis, it is evident that the impact of gender bias on single men in Rumbia Subdistrict extends beyond the loss of one or two employment opportunities and instead forms a chain of interconnected consequences:

1. Initial stage: Job applications submitted by single men are less frequently processed compared to those submitted by women for the same types of positions and qualifications.
2. Subsequent stage: Single men are pushed into casual employment characterized by unstable income and lack of job continuity.
3. Next stage: Employment and income instability lead to economic dependence on families of origin and the postponement of life plans, such as marriage and independent living.
4. Socio-psychological stage: Single men experience social pressure and stigma associated with being perceived as "unsuccessful," particularly when compared to women in their social environment who are already employed and earning income.

This sequence demonstrates that gender bias at the level of recruitment practices and labor preferences has serious implications for the livelihood sustainability and future prospects of single men in Rumbia Subdistrict.

Discussion/Analysis

Forms of Injustice Experienced by Single Men from the Perspective of Theories of Injustice

The field findings indicate that single men in Rumbia Subdistrict experience a series of injustices manifested in restricted access to stable employment, displacement into casual labor, income insecurity, and social pressure resulting from being perceived as "unsuccessful." The previous Results section described these patterns descriptively; in this section, they are interpreted as forms of structural injustice (Blunch, 2018).

Within Nancy Fraser's framework, gender injustice is never singular but rather a combination of distributive injustice (maldistribution) and recognitional injustice (misrecognition). In the case of Rumbia, these two dimensions intersect in concrete ways. From the perspective of distribution, single men lose access to relatively stable and waged employment, while women increasingly occupy such positions in local factories, shops, and cooperatives. This situation places single men in a condition of economic maldistribution, as access to material resources namely employment and income is not allocated equitably across gender (Datta Gupta & Kromann, 2014).

From the perspective of recognition, single men internalize stigma as "failed men," because local norms continue to position men as primary breadwinners. Their inability to enter an increasingly feminized local labor market results in status degradation within the family and the wider community (Tyrowicz & van der Velde, 2024).

Thus, the injustice experienced by single men is not merely a matter of "difficulty finding work," but rather a configuration of dual injustice: disadvantage at the level of distribution (access to jobs and income) and at the level of recognition (social status and masculine identity). Over the long term, this pattern has the potential to generate serious social vulnerability, including delayed economic independence, postponed marriage, and heightened intergenerational tension within households.

Internationally, scholarship on gender injustice in labor markets has largely focused on the structural disadvantages faced by women in wages, labor participation, and working conditions. The contribution of this article lies in demonstrating that within an enduring patriarchal gender order, new pockets of injustice can emerge that disproportionately affect young, single men in specific sectors and contexts without implying that women have been freed from injustice in other arenas.

Patriarchy, Gender Regimes, and the Paradox of Single Men's Vulnerability

Theoretically, R. W. Connell explains gender relations through the concept of a gender regime, operating across three interrelated dimensions: the division of labor, power relations, and affective/sexual relations (cathexis). In many contexts, patriarchal gender regimes produce women's subordination in labor markets through restricted access, lower wages, and heavier domestic burdens. This pattern is also evident in studies of gender inequality in Indonesia, which show that women's labor force participation remains lower and that women are concentrated in low-paid jobs.

The findings from Rumbia do not negate this patriarchal picture but instead reveal a new paradox within it.

First, at the level of labor, women have entered low- to middle-wage employment en masse (cassava-processing factories, shops, cooperatives), while single men are pushed to the margins of the labor market (casual work, seasonal labor, or unemployment). This reflects a form of occupational segregation that no longer merely separates "men's work" from "women's work," but also produces intra-class competition within low-wage sectors one in which young men increasingly lose out. This observation aligns with theories of occupational segregation articulated by Anker and Reskin, which emphasize the role of employer preferences and gender stereotypes in job allocation.

Second, at the level of power, patriarchal relations persist: men are still positioned as household heads and breadwinners. However, when single men fail to secure stable employment, they occupy a vulnerable position lacking economic bargaining power while still bearing masculine expectations as future providers. This produces a form of masculine vulnerability that is rarely addressed in classic patriarchy literature, which typically portrays men solely as beneficiaries of dominance.

Third, at the level of cathexis, affective relations within families and communities intensify pressure on single men to “settle quickly” and “have a job.” When women in their environment are already employed and contributing economically while they themselves are not, feelings of shame, inferiority, and latent conflict with parents emerge. Within Connell’s framework, this tension can be understood as a conflict between hegemonic masculinity norms and economic reality, potentially resulting in identity crises among young men.

This paradox demonstrates that patriarchy not only disadvantages women but can also generate new forms of vulnerability for men, particularly when labor market configurations change (for example, through the feminization of certain sectors) while patriarchal norms regarding male breadwinning remain intact. This is why the injustice affecting single men in Rumbia should be understood not as an individual problem, but as a serious social issue if left unaddressed.

The Operation of Gender Bias within the Local Labor Market Structure

The next analytical question concerns how gender bias operates within the local labor market structure. Based on the empirical findings presented earlier, such bias can be understood through a combination of micro-level mechanisms (employer preferences) and macro-level structures (patriarchal norms and labor market segregation).

First, at the level of labor demand, employers in Rumbia explicitly express a preference for female workers, who are perceived as more meticulous, more compliant, “less demanding,” and more willing to accept lower wages. This pattern is consistent with international findings showing that in low-wage, labor-intensive sectors, women are often positioned as “ideal workers” due to assumptions about control and cost efficiency. In Rumbia, the consequence is that job applications submitted by single men are frequently overlooked for the same positions, even when educational qualifications are equivalent. This constitutes a form of taste-based discrimination rooted in gender stereotypes rather than actual differences in productivity.

Second, at the level of labor market structure, women’s willingness to work close to home with flexible hours and relatively low wages facilitates their absorption into the local economy. While this is positive for increasing women’s labor participation, for single men whose access to formal employment outside the area is limited it creates a crowding-out effect: local low-skill labor segments become saturated with female labor, pushing single men further to the margins of the labor market.

Third, at the level of social and cultural norms, Indonesia’s persistent patriarchal culture which positions women primarily as caregivers and men as breadwinners forms a crucial backdrop. Ironically, in Rumbia this norm produces a new inequality:

1. Women bear a double burden (domestic and public), yet gain access to employment and recognition as economic contributors.
2. Single men bear breadwinner expectations but are excluded from available employment opportunities, resulting in a combination of economic exclusion and psychosocial pressure.

Accordingly, gender bias in Rumbia’s labor market operates systemically:

1. through discriminatory employer preferences,
2. through a feminized configuration of local labor markets in specific segments, and
3. through unchanged patriarchal norms that intensify the consequences of exclusion for single men.

The *Mubādalāh* Approach and Its Contribution to the Discourse on Discrimination and Injustice

The **mubādalāh approach**, developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, emphasizes reciprocity between men and women, positioning both as equal subjects and mutual partners in fulfilling rights and obligations. While *mubādalāh* has primarily been applied to family and domestic relations, its principles are equally relevant to labor market structures. Read through the lens of *mubādalāh*, the labor market configuration in Rumbia reveals two central problems.

First, there is no reciprocity in access to employment. Increased female labor participation is an important achievement; however, when it is realized through mechanisms that exclude single men from local employment opportunities, reciprocity is undermined. Women become active economic subjects, while single men lose recognition as autonomous economic actors contradicting the *mubādalāh* principle that rejects the hegemony of one gender over another.

Second, there is an unequal distribution of burdens and benefits. Women carry double workloads (domestic and public), while single men carry social expectations without adequate access to economic benefits such as wages, work experience, and stability. *Mubādalāh* calls for a balanced and mutually beneficial distribution of rights and responsibilities; in Rumbia, however, the labor market generates new asymmetries in the distribution of risks and opportunities.

The scholarly contribution of this article to the discourse on discrimination and injustice is twofold. First, empirically, it demonstrates that in specific local labor market contexts, gender injustice may manifest as vulnerability among single men without negating the continued injustices faced by women in other domains. This enriches international literature, which often focuses exclusively on women's disadvantages, by highlighting the complexity of patriarchal configurations in the Global South, particularly Indonesia. Second, theoretically, it bridges Fraser's theory of justice, Connell's gender regime framework, and the *mubādalāh* approach. The Rumbia case illustrates that a comprehensive understanding of injustice requires integrating:

1. Redistribution recognition lens (employment access and social status),
2. Patriarchal gender regime lens (labor division, power, and affective relations), and
3. Reciprocity oriented *mubādalāh* lens (normative ideals of equal partnership).

By combining these frameworks, the analysis moves beyond descriptive inequality to show how and why local labor market structures can become severely harmful to the livelihoods of single men: they are pushed into economic exclusion, experience social status degradation, and face tension with religious and cultural norms regarding male breadwinning. From a justice perspective, such conditions demand interventions not only at the individual level, but also through local labor policies and the renewal of religious discourse to ensure that the principle of reciprocity is realized within labor market structures.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that in Rumbia Subdistrict, single men experience structural injustice in access to employment. They are excluded from relatively stable jobs (factories, shops, cooperatives), pushed into casual labor and unemployment, and subjected to social pressure for being perceived as "unsuccessful." These conditions are linked to employers' preferences for female workers, the feminization of local low- to middle-wage labor market segments, limited skill development among some single men, and the persistence of patriarchal norms that continue to demand men act as

primary breadwinners. Through the combined perspectives of theories of injustice (Fraser), patriarchal gender regimes (Connell), and the mubādalāh approach, the findings reveal that gender injustice in labor markets does not only disadvantage women, but can also generate new forms of vulnerability for young single men in specific contexts. The scholarly contribution of this research lies in explaining how the interaction of maldistribution and misrecognition operates within a transforming local labor market, while offering a mubādalāh-based reinterpretation of male–female labor relations.

Based on these findings, this study recommends: 1). The implementation of non-discriminatory recruitment practices at the local level; 2). Skill development and job placement programs for single men that do not restrict women's access to employment; and 3). The strengthening of mubādalāh-based gender justice discourse within religious and community spaces, so that the principle of reciprocity between men and women is also realized in labor market structures.

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