

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SUMATRAN WORKFORCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article investigates the position of women in the workforce in Sumatra, concentrating on the ongoing gender disparities caused by conventional cultural norms and structural bias. Despite growing awareness of gender equality, women in Sumatra, particularly within patriarchal Batak communities, face major impediments to leadership opportunities, fair recruitment processes, wage parity, and professional advancement. Changes in society are increasingly promoting women's participation in male-dominated industries, yet challenges persist. The report emphasizes the importance of policy reforms such as equal education, gender-sensitive employment practices, and positive cultural developments. These policies seek to create a more inclusive workplace, improve women's socioeconomic status, and promote regional growth.

**Keywords:** *Gender Equality, Women in the Workforce, Sumatra Culture*

**INTRODUCTION**

Gender equality is a major problem that places women at a disadvantage thereby stymieing economic growth and societal advancement (Paola, 2021). While, gender inequality is defined as any exogenously imposed difference between male and female economic agents that, by shaping their behavior, has implications for aggregate economic growth. In practice, gender inequality is typically modeled as differences between men and women in endowments, constraints, or preferences (Manuel & Stephan, 2021). For example, we usually assume women and men have different physical, mental and emotional characteristics. Thus, women are (or should be) communal, which means they are (or should be) warm, pleasant, caring, gentle, humble, sensitive and affectionate and men are (or should be) agents, which means they are (or should be) strong, powerful, aggressive, competent, competitive and independent (Sany & Rahardja, 2016).

The persistent gender inequalities that currently exist across the developed and developing world are receiving increasing attention from economists, policymakers, and the general public (Gijsbert & David 2016; Brendan & Robin 2016). One example in North Sumatra, the issue of gender inequality is also a concern, albeit in a unique cultural context. Batak society, one of the largest ethnic groups in North Sumatra, has a strong patriarchal structure, where men are often perceived as the head of the family and the holder of the inheritance. Considering the historical context of Toba Batak culture, which is characterized by a patriarchal system, women are not granted the chance to assume leadership roles. The TBP strictly follows the concept of gender-blind anthropocentrism. Given this cultural framework, women are denied the right to become leaders. The researchers emphasize that the patriarchal structure of Toba Batak marginalizes women from leadership positions and public involvement, while simultaneously assigning them to a separate domain or sphere (Naibaho et al., 2024).

Changes are beginning to take place as awareness of the importance of gender equality increases. Many Batak women are now striving for higher education and careers in various fields, including previously male-dominated fields such as engineering and business. One concrete example is the increasing number of women holding leadership positions in organizations and companies in North Sumatra. While there are still challenges, such as stereotypes and discrimination, these women continue to demonstrate their ability and dedication. To achieve greater gender equality, there needs to be collaboration between the government, community organizations and the private sector in creating policies that support women's rights. Education about gender equality from an early age is also important to change long-held cultural views and norms.

The study will examine different facets of current gender inequality, such as salary disparities, obstacles to professional growth, and biased recruitment practices that mainly affect women, limiting their economic opportunities and social progress. Initiatives to enhance gender equality in Sumatra will concentrate on eliminating these systemic obstacles through targeted policy measures, increasing access to education, financial resources, and leadership roles, and promoting cultural shifts towards inclusivity in the workplace. The purpose of this research is to offer effective policy suggestions for fostering a more equitable and inclusive work environment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

De Beauvoir's theory of existential feminism emphasizes that women have the freedom to define themselves and resist the norms that constrain them. It is a call for true gender equality, where women have equal rights to pursue the life they want without being limited by stereotypes or discrimination. Simone de Beauvoir's theory of existential feminism is central to understanding the role of women in the workforce, including in regions like Sumatra. At its core, this theory asserts that women should have the freedom to define themselves and not be constrained by societal norms and expectations. It emphasizes personal freedom and responsibility, urging women to break free from the roles traditionally assigned to them by society.

Applying this theory to the workforce in Sumatra, we can see its relevance in several ways:

- **Breaking Stereotypes:** Many women in Sumatra are stepping into roles traditionally dominated by men, such as in engineering and business. This move aligns with de Beauvoir's idea of resisting societal norms that dictate what roles women should occupy.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Existential feminism underscores the importance of education in empowering women. In Sumatra, increasing access to education for women is crucial for enabling them to pursue careers of their choice, thus challenging and changing the historical norms.
- **Leadership and Decision-Making:** The rise of women in leadership positions in Sumatra reflects the existential feminist view that women have the right to pursue positions of power and influence. This shift helps challenge the traditional patriarchal structures and paves the way for greater gender equality.
- **Policy and Cultural Change:** To truly achieve gender equality, there needs to be a cultural shift. Existential feminism calls for societal transformation that values and supports women's choices. This is reflected in the need for policies that promote gender equality, anti-discrimination laws, and cultural education that starts from a young age.

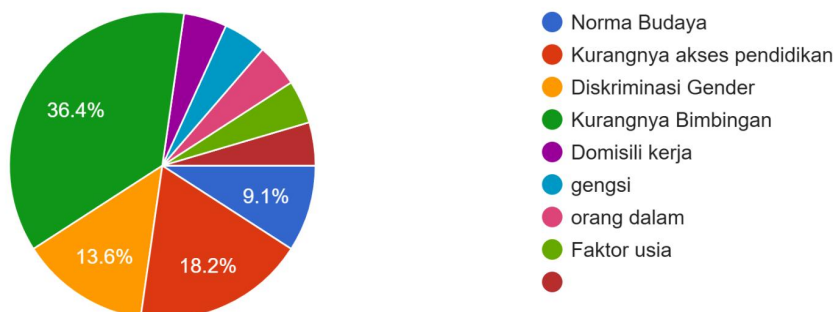
## METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a qualitative research design to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by women in the Sumatran workforce, specifically focusing on key issues such as wage gaps, leadership opportunities, and employment barriers. Utilizing purposive sampling, approximately 10-20 participants from various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, services, and microfinance, will be selected, ensuring representation from both rural and urban areas. Questionnaires will be distributed to gather detailed insights into their experiences, emphasizing education, discrimination, microfinance, and gender roles. The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and key themes across participant responses. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, will be prioritized. This methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing women's participation in the labor market in North Sumatra, offering valuable insights for policy recommendations to enhance gender equality in the region.

## RESULT

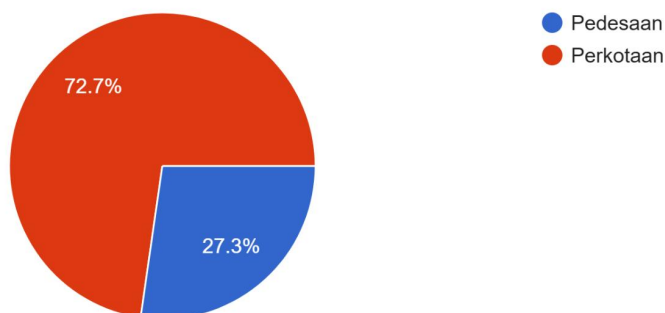
1. Apa hambatan terbesar yang Anda hadapi dalam memperoleh pekerjaan?

22 responses



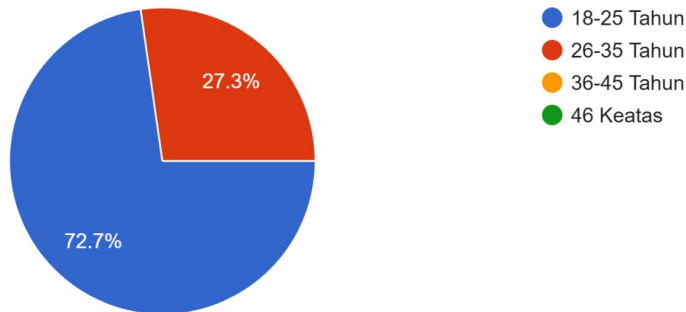
2. Apakah Anda tinggal di daerah pedesaan atau perkotaan?

22 responses



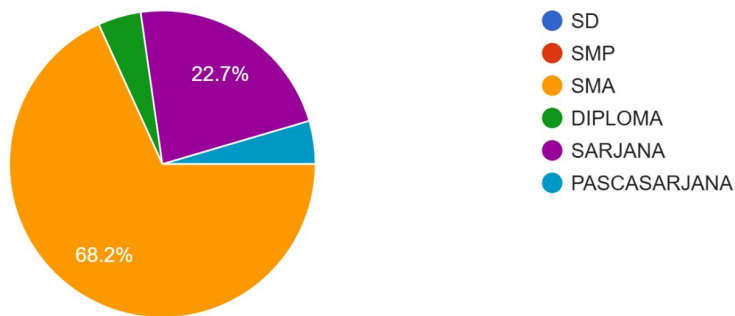
### 3. Berapa usia Anda?

22 responses



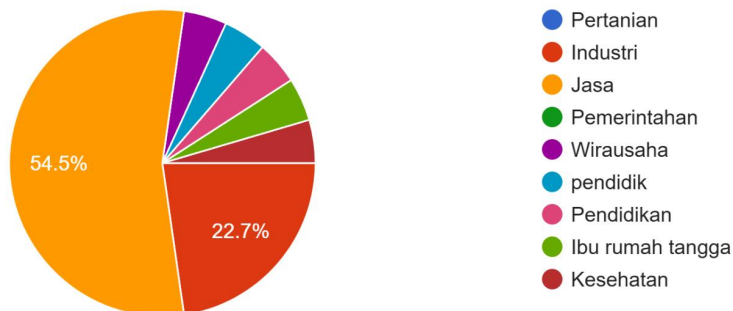
### 4. Apa tingkat pendidikan terakhir Anda?

22 responses



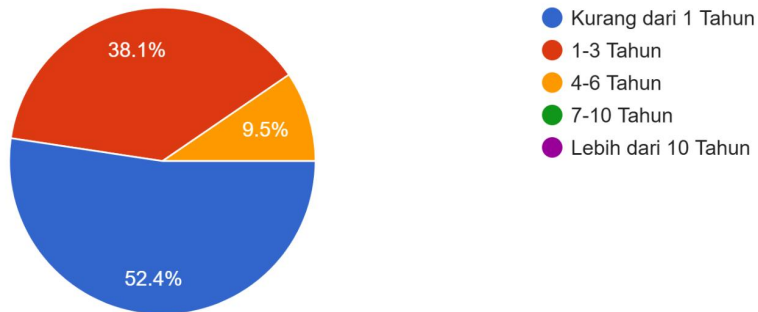
### 5. Di sektor apa Anda bekerja?

22 responses



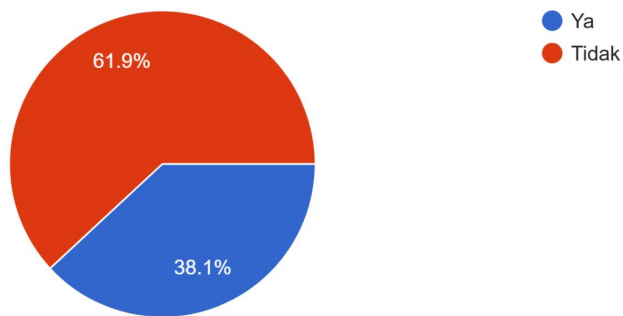
6. Berapa lama Anda telah bekerja di sektor ini?

21 responses



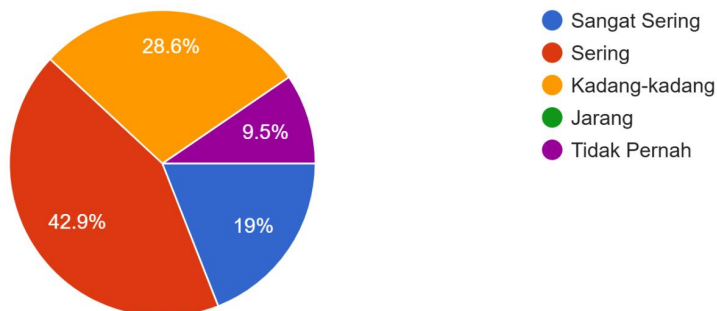
7. Apakah Anda pernah mengalami diskriminasi di tempat kerja karena gender Anda?

21 responses



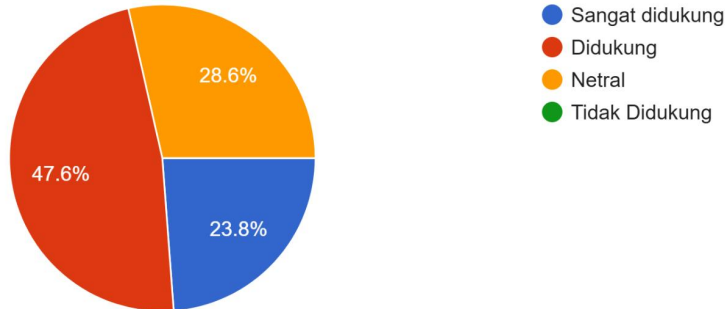
8. Seberapa sering Anda merasa bahwa Anda memiliki kesempatan yang sama dengan rekan kerja laki-laki dalam hal promosi dan pengembangan karir?

21 responses



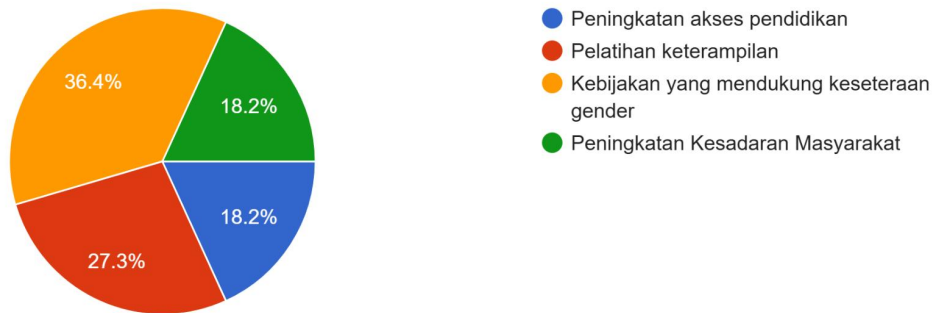
9. Apakah Anda merasa didukung oleh atasan dan rekan kerja dalam menjalankan peran Anda di tempat kerja?

21 responses



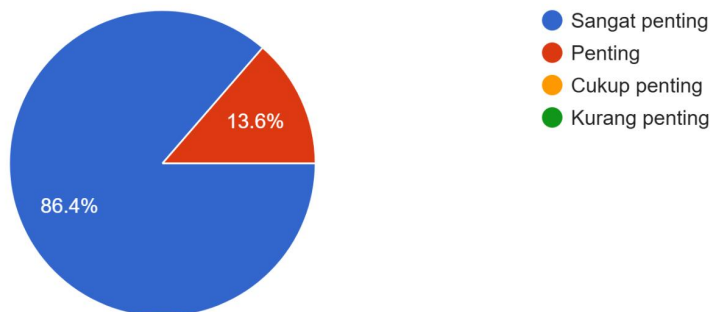
10. Apa yang menurut Anda bisa dilakukan untuk meningkatkan peran perempuan dalam angkatan kerja di Sumatera?

22 responses



11. Seberapa penting pendidikan dalam meningkatkan partisipasi perempuan dalam angkatan kerja?

22 responses



12. Apakah ada pengalaman atau pandangan lain yang ingin Anda bagikan terkait peran perempuan dalam angkatan kerja di Sumatera?

18 responses

1. Tidak ada
2. Semangat aja pokoknya kerja ya prennn kita perintis bukan pewaris
3. Tidak ada . karena didalam lingkungan saya bekerja tidak memandang gender
4. Ada beberapa pekerjaan yang kurang cocok untuk perempuan, dan itu fair. Namun yang menjadi deskriminasi biasanya dari kebijakan pelamar kerja adalah perempuan yang berumur 25 ke atas dan atau perempuan sudah menikah sangat dihindari oleh perekrut, padahal usia tersebut masih terbilang produktif bahkan mampu bekerja lebih baik dari usia dibawahnya. Namun sebagai perempuan yang menuntut kesetaraan gender juga harus paham jika tidak semua orang harus memahami emosi dan moodnya, ketika perempuan sudah di tempatkan bahkan untuk posisi penting harus bisa menempatkan dirinya dan menjaga kestabilan emosinya.
5. Sebaiknya perempuan lebih di lindungi tidak di pekerjakan hingga larut malam,
6. Semuanya sama rata hanya saja nasibnya yang berbeda matikan koruptor
7. peran perempuan selalu penting dalam dunia kerja
8. gak
9. Saya sangat sangat menginginkan keadilan seperti kesetaraan gender di dlm suatu pekerjaan, baik dlm hal tenaga ataupun jabatan.
10. Menurut saya baik perempuan dengan laki-laki itu memiliki hak sama, selagi kita berusaha maka apa yang kita inginkan pasti tercapai.
11. tidak ada
12. Perempuan seringkali menghadapi diskriminasi dalam hal gaji, promosi, dan jenis pekerjaan yang ditawarkan. Stereotipe gender yang masih kuat membuat perempuan dianggap kurang cocok untuk pekerjaan tertentu atau posisi kepemimpinan.
13. Kesempatan untuk mendapatkan pendidikan dan pelatihan yang berkualitas masih terbatas bagi perempuan di beberapa daerah di Sumatera, sehingga membatasi potensi mereka untuk bersaing di pasar kerja.
14. Stereotipe gender yang masih kuat membuat perempuan dianggap kurang cocok untuk pekerjaan tertentu atau posisi kepemimpinan.
15. Jika bisa semua sektoral pekerjaan baik di bidang pemerintahan ataupun swasta jangan memilah pekerja wanita dari usia atau pun statusnya.. berikan kesempatan bagi wanita yg sudah berkeluarga dan berusia di atas 30 tahunan.
16. Saya pernah bekerja di pt alfaria Trijaya,dan dalam pekerjaan saya,manajer selalu mengutamakan laki-laki yang menjadi kepala toko. Saya harap kedepannya pt tersebut dapat memberikan kesempatan yang sama terhadap perempuan untuk dijadikan sebagai kepala toko.
17. tidak ada

## DISCUSSION

To examine the research article based on the chart results, the following is an analysis for each question, summarizing the responses:

### 1. Experiences about the role of women in the labor force in Sumatra:

Several respondents stated that women in the workplace frequently encounter prejudice, notably in recruitment procedures that favor men. Many people believed that their gender affected their prospects of obtaining leadership positions or specific types of occupations. For example, one respondent stated that in their organization, managers are more likely to designate men as store heads, and that they hoped that this possibility will become more equitable in the future.

### **2. Gender justice and equality:**

Some respondents strongly favored gender equality in terms of opportunities and positions. They expect women to be given equal opportunities in terms of promotion and career development, without discriminating based on age or marital status.

### **3. Gender challenges in certain occupations:**

Gender discrimination remains a barrier for some women, particularly in relation to the view that women are less suited to certain positions or leadership roles. In addition, there are differences in salary and promotion opportunities they experience compared to men, suggesting strong gender stereotypes.

### **4. Protection of women in the workplace:**

There is a demand for women to be better protected, for example, not to be employed late at night to maintain their safety and well-being. This viewpoints the need for regulations or policies that better protect women workers in the work environment.

### **5. Education and training opportunities:**

Quality education and training in some areas of Sumatra is considered limited for women. This limits women's potential to compete in the labor market, and leads to inequalities in career development.

## **CONCLUSION**

Finally, this study reveals the persistent gender differences in North Sumatra's workforce, which are determined by both traditional cultural norms and systemic discrimination. Despite rising awareness of gender equality, women continue to confront major barriers to education, career advancement, and equitable recruitment procedures. The patriarchal nature of the Toba Batak culture hinders gender equality attempts by limiting women's positions in leadership and the public arena. However, changes in societal attitudes and the rise of women in male-dominated industries indicate positive growth. The report underlines the need for specific policies that promote women's educational and economic prospects, as well as societal shifts toward inclusivity. There is potential for a more equal work environment for women in North Sumatra through joint efforts among the government, corporate sector, and communities, contributing to overall economic and societal growth.

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