Patali Gumbira Empowerment Strategy as an Effort to Build Women's Resilience in Responding to the Social Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Elly Malihah  
*Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia*

Siti Komariah  
*Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia*

Wilodati

Lingga Utami  
*Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia*

Arindini Ayu Kisvi Rizkia  
*Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia*

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Patali Gumbira Empowerment Strategy as an Effort to Build Women's Resilience in Responding to the Social Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Authors
Elly Maliah, Siti Komariah, Wilodati, Lingga Utami, Arindini Ayu Kisvi Rizkia, Yazid Taqiuddin Ahmad, and Rengga Akbar Munggaran

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**Patali Gumbira Empowerment Strategy as an Effort to Build Women's Resilience in Responding to the Social Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

By Elly Malihah,1 Siti Komariah, Wilodati, Rengga Akbar Munggaran, Lingga Utami, Arindini Ayu Kisvi Rizkia, and Yazid Taqiyuddin Ahmad

**Abstract**

Responding to the increase in women’s burdens as a result of COVID-19 has become the focus for the Patali Gumbira empowerment program. The focus of this study is to identify strategies to build women’s resilience in response to COVID-19 based on their social capital of knowledge, experience, and aspirations. This study uses a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) approach, which explores how women are often central in maintaining the lives of their families and communities. The findings in this study indicate that the empowerment of Patali Gumbira is a means for building women's social resilience through the framework of the education system, structured advocacy, and economics. Patali Gumbira works to 1) strengthen women's leadership capacities and build their networks with the Family Welfare Program’s women's organizations in the village public sphere, 2) provide advocacy training to understand, prevent, and handle cases of violence against women, and 3) offer hairdressing soft-skill training as an opportunity to create sustainable business services run by women. These are strategies to strengthen women’s resilience and build a sense of belonging for women to work together to overcome the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Gender Equality, Social Capital, Women’s Empowerment, Social Resilience

**Introduction**

The new novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which has become endemic throughout the world, including in Indonesia, is a problem that needs to be addressed optimally. Besides affecting health, the COVID-19 crisis also affects all aspects of the life of the community, including the economy, socio-culture, politics, and other aspects of life. The most significant socio-economic problem is that it has exacerbated the inequality experienced by women, especially those who are most marginalized. The patriarchal culture has furthered gender inequality and kept many women in poverty (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2016). In the case of economic opportunity, the experiences of women and men are different, because women are far behind in accessing economic resources as a gateway to eliminating various injustices in society (Niko, 2019).

Data from UN Woman shows that the prolonged pandemic has created stressful conditions for women. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the gender inequality that had already been experienced by Indonesian women, so the position of women became increasingly vulnerable (Hatmini, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has created a double burden for women in addition to their burdens within the family sphere. Although the number of male deaths from COVID-

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1 Elly Malihah is a professor in the Sociology Education Study Programme, Faculty of Social Sciences Education, Universitas Pendidikan, Indonesia. She focuses on the sociology of education, gender, community development, and social community issues. Some of her publications are related to gender and community development, social dynamics, and education. She owns several intellectual property rights related to this field in Indonesia. Scopus ID 56897278300 on https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=56897278300. Google Scholar Profile: Elly Malihah Setiadi. She can be reached at ellyms@upi.edu.
19 is higher than that of women, women face increased risks of termination of employment and domestic violence caused by economic problems (Wenham et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic does not have gender-neutral effects, because the position of women from the start was not comparable to the position of men in social, cultural, economic, and political arrangements (Agustina et al., 2021). According to the Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection and Family Planning in West Java Province in July 2020, many women are victims of domestic violence due to high stress levels stemming from the pressures of obtaining the necessities of life, which results in wider socio-economic gaps between men and women and increasing acts of violence against women (Dewi, 2020).

Additional burdens experienced by women during the COVID-19 pandemic have often gone unnoticed, and women’s particular needs not addressed within the major narratives about handling the pandemic. Therefore, we need special efforts to take responsive steps that take into account the social crisis situation for women so that they can be empowered. Due to COVID-19, it is necessary to implement a women's empowerment movement as a resilience effort.

The contribution of women to the resilience effort against COVID-19 has actually been extraordinary and should not be ignored. First, Lt. Gen. TNI Doni Monardo, Chair of the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19, believes that women have spearheaded the handling of COVID-19. The data shows that of the total health nurses handling COVID-19 in Indonesia, 71% are women and only 29% are men. This ratio is not much different from the ratio of female to male global health workers, which the World Health Organization claims are 70% are women and 30% men (Monardo, 2020). Second, women have played a strategic role as part of the community-based handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the contributions of women in community-based handling of the pandemic is through the Family Welfare Empowerment organization, which brings together women, especially mothers, to help accelerate the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in West Java Province, Family Welfare Empowerment Organization from 27 regencies/cities is at the forefront of collecting public health data, combing through the availability of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) at local health centers, and conducting counseling and education related to the dangers of COVID-19. This initiative begins at the sub-district level and extends to the village, hamlet, neighborhood, and dasawisma² (bandungkab.go.id 2020). Third, women are generally expected to contribute to family resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. National efforts to break the chain of transmission of COVID-19 include social distancing and instructions to work from home (WFH). This WFH policy was then immediately followed by the school from home (SFH) policy. Under the conditions of the WFH and SFH policies, women as workers, mothers, and wives are generally perceived and expected to be able to fulfill at least the following three roles: (1) an employee who completes her work at home; (2) an impromptu teacher who assists her children in various tasks during SFH; and (3) a wife who ensures that the needs of the family are met in the home. Based on the information above, the significant contribution of women in handling the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia should be clear. Further, the social expectations for women to carry out these various roles during the pandemic have the potential to increase women's psychological and physical burdens.

This article addresses women’s resilience and empowerment that took place during adaptation to new COVID-19 habits, namely, Patali Gumbira (Empowerment of the Cililin Community of Mutual Cooperation to Become an Independent Community from the Family). This structured empowerment program addressed the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 upon women in Cililin District, West Bandung Regency. The Patali Gumbira empowerment

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2 Dasawisma is a group of mothers from 10 heads of neighboring families who facilitate the running of a program.
team collaborates in an integrated manner with various cross-sectors including the provincial and village governments, professional institutions, women practitioners, and the media as well as the Cililin Village Family Welfare Program. The target area for this activity is focused on three village areas in Cililin District: Cililin Village, Budi Harja Village, and Batu Layang Village. To address the goal of women's empowerment, the study surveyed five women representatives from the three selected villages, making a total of 15 female participants.

The purpose of this empowerment initiative is to help women fulfill their basic needs, and to increase their social position and dignity by using leadership education, advocacy, and hairdressing skills development to build women's resilience in responding to problems during the pandemic. The implementation of this activity is a form of social capital for women to be empowered and represent themselves by voicing their aspirations. According to Amalia (2015), “Various collective actions for productive efforts are decided and designed together based on problems and needs that are identified together through local institutional patterns through a social learning process that takes place in the dynamics of social interactions and relations.”

According to Fukuyama (2002), social capital is, "a condition that must be met for human development, economic development, social stability, politics, and democracy." Relying on shared norms and values, these human associations generate trust and an extensive social network for improving people's welfare. The development of social capital will increase the spirit of cooperation, trust, and efforts to minimize poverty (Rustinsyah, 2018).

The *Patali Gumbira* empowerment program is expected to build social capital for the social and economic development of women, and especially to empower those who can respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in a positive, productive way starting from the family. It aims to improve welfare, create jobs, provide open equal access to education, and instill cultural and human values that benefit women. But the most important thing for women is to be free from dependence, which means to have a transformative vision towards change for the betterment of women. Therefore, the perspective of community resilience helps us understand resource management decisions and their differences.

Several studies related to community resilience have addressed social capital variables in overcoming the impact of COVID-19. These studies include those carried out by Rupita (2020) by empowering small businesses with a women's group joint venture led by Family Welfare Empowerment Organization for women in Sungai Bundung Laut Village, Sungai Kunyit District, and Mempawah Regency to produce cloth masks and disinfectants during the COVID-19 pandemic. This business group is a means of building community social resilience by empowering communities through small businesses. The empowerment of this group relies on local social capital that is built between communities. Furthermore, Sunarno and Sulistyowati (2021) have shown that community resilience stems from the value of belonging to the group (i.e. local residents), and includes the social capital of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and harmony with nature.

Resilience is also closely related to the ability of individuals to empower themselves. Resilience depends on protective factors (internal and external), such as social support and high aspects of religiosity that can be appropriately utilized to achieve empowerment (Koroh and Andriany, 2020). Therefore, this study discusses how the *Patali Gumbira* empowerment strategy is as an effort for developing women's resilience in responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cililin District, West Bandung Regency, and explores other social capital that women have used in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Research Method**

This study used a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) approach. FPAR is a research methodology model that is suitable for facilitating the emergence of women's voices and collective empowerment. This approach prioritizes dialogue, interaction, and reflection.
that is strengthened by methods, media, and training instruments deemed relevant. Cililin Village, Budi Harja Village, and Batu Layang Village were selected as the locations for the study. The study focused on burdens experienced by women during the pandemic, including women who became the backbone of the family, women who were victims of layoffs, and women whose husbands lost their jobs. Therefore, the targets for this empowerment were five female representatives from three selected villages, so that the total number of female participants was 15 people.

The implementation of this FPAR approach model makes women the center by involving women in forming Pentahelix collaborations from various cross-sectors (see Fig. 1).

**Figure 1: Pentahelix Collaboration Organizing Patali Gumbira**

1) Academics (Conceptors) conceptualize designed activities
2) The Village Government (the Regulator) makes policies related to the sustainability of Empowerment
3) Women's Professional Practitioners/Institutions (Facilitators) provide materials related to women's modalities
4) Family Welfare Empowerment Program as Women's Organization (Accelerator) assists women and maximizes existing potential
5) Media (Catalyst) is the trigger for the disclosure of information to the wider community

Using a Feminist Participatory Action Research approach with the collaboration of Pentahelix from various cross-sectors, this research aims to accelerate the resilience of women in the village, and to outline a transformative vision of their broader role in responding to the impact of COVID-19.

**Results and Discussion**

Based on the results of the study and discussion of priority issues, the empowerment of Patali Gumbira is carried out so that women in three villages in Cililin District have resilience to face the challenges of their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. This program 1) strengthens women's leadership capacity; 2) provides advocacy training in preventing and handling cases of violence against women; and 3) provides soft-skill training in hairdressing as a sustainable women's business opportunity.
**Strengthening Women's Leadership Capacity**

To reduce the problems faced by women during the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop strategies for strengthening the capacity of women who can deal with these problems, there is a need for training that puts forward female leadership skills based on knowledge, understanding, skills, and behavior change (awareness). The *Patali Gumbira* as Women's Leadership Training includes educational materials that will strengthen women by mapping the burden of problems experienced by women and improving the condition and position of women in their respective areas. Empowerment leadership can help increase self-confidence and provide "super leadership" skills, which means the individuals direct themselves (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014).

In the leadership training session entitled “We are Leaders,” the training is assisted by a practitioner of the Patriot Village Program Pool of Talent Team of West Java Province, who offers two methods/approaches to leadership material. First, the leader solicits personal history and background from the participants using a technique called “River of Life.” The leader encourages women to share both good and bad things about themselves, in order to formulate a feminine ethic that counterbalances the domination of masculine ethics. Feminism has explained a lot about the role of feminine morality, which stems from the concrete experiences of women. The substantial experience of women that distinguishes them from men is motherhood, starting from conceiving, giving birth, breastfeeding, and caring for children (Yulianti et al., 2018). Second, the leader facilitates a group discussion session wherein the participants understood that each of them had dared to be a female leader in the family, workplace, and community. Women face many challenges during the pandemic that can be recognized through this discussion session. These challenges include the women's burdens in carrying out domestic tasks, domestic violence, layoffs, divorce, and a decrease in family income (especially for female entrepreneurs).

The presenters during this session explained that this approach was very effective in exploring the various responses from the female participants, showing how they could raise the awareness of others, provide solutions, and maximizing their potential. The awareness and form of collaboration between the women participants are related to their sense of belonging. Community awareness is geographically connected in this case to a certain place or region and to emotional interactions, beliefs, and joint actions (Rupita, 2020). Women can think about how they plan their lives and how to act strategically as they develop their leadership spirit and their sense of belonging. The strengthening of women's leadership capital in the three Cililin Sub-districts is described in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Concepts in Women's Leadership Training**

![Diagram of Concepts in Women's Leadership Training]
A sense of belonging is an important psychological factor for realizing women's resilience (Sunarno and Sulistyowati (2021). In a group context, belonging can be assessed through a sense of community (women's group awareness) that strengthens empathy within each group of women and gives birth to socially responsible behavior in the community. The head of this empowerment session explained:

The key to success during this pandemic is synergy and collaboration, in making efforts so that the pandemic does not have a prolonged impact on women. We must strive for awareness of women's willingness and ability to become leaders so that they have a sense of belonging and trust in other women because women are leaders themselves (Interview, Didah, 2021).

These social values and behaviors function as social capital to face the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in line with Nowell and Boyd (2014), who emphasize that the awareness of a sense of community makes people feel responsible for engaging with and supporting each other. Supporting each woman’s belief in her leadership capacities and her motivation to develop joint solutions with those closest to her is the foundation in creating women's resilience in responding to tough challenges. The idea of creating awareness for women's groups also focuses on positive things in the community’s social capital. For psychologists, professionals, and policymakers, there is a real need to develop community awareness to provide services and interventions with positive impacts on physical and mental health (Michalski et al., 2020; Terry et al., 2019).

**Strengthening Advocacy for the Prevention and Handling of Cases of Violence against Women**

The decline in social and economic problems in the large-scale social restrictions, work from home, learning from home policies and the limited access to assistance during COVID-19 caused tension in many households and increased women's vulnerability to domestic violence. The number of domestic violence cases against women and children increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, a concerning finding. This situation cannot be separated from the patriarchal social structure that does not serve the interests and needs of women. As a result, women experience gender-based discrimination and violence within the family, community, and other sectors of life (Rahmi, Atikah, 2021).

The Advocacy Training on Prevention and Handling of Cases of Violence against Women is a session of Patali Gumbira Empowerment with the theme “You and Me,” which aims to provide an understanding of violence against women and provide advocacy strategies regarding preventive and curative efforts in the event of violence and sexual harassment. The objectives of this training include: Providing knowledge and understanding to female participants regarding forms of violence against women and gender justice; increasing awareness and criticality of female participants regarding violence against women; disseminating information to female participants regarding how to submit complaints about violence against women.

This training is in line with the view of Andriani (2020), who notes: "With this capacity building activity for cadres of law-aware groups, it is hoped that they will be able to advocate appropriately, efficiently, and following the principles of a victim perspective and gender justice." This activity involves collaboration with academics and practitioners in the field of gender studies that uses an interactive discussion model and is delivered through the media meta plan, PowerPoint slides, and the video "Online-Based Gender Violence,” and via empathy maps. See figure 3 for a roadmap of this training module.
Figure 3: Advocacy Materials for the Prevention and Handling of Violence Against Women

Efforts to strengthen advocacy for the prevention and handling of cases of violence against women are significant in connection with the Gender Responsive Policy that the Indonesian government has continuously reiterated, which expresses the need to support women's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The presenters of this session explained that:

Recognition and understanding of forms of Gender-Based Violence (KBG) is a form of action that endangers or causes suffering to a person, which is carried out based on social differences including the gender of men and women. Of course, this can result in physical, sexual, and psychological suffering or neglect, including threats, coercion, and various other forms that rob a person of freedom, both in the public sphere and in private life (Interview, Epi, 2021).

Based on the presentation concerning the flow of protection and complaints of violence against women, the female participants understood that women have the right to make complaints through the public services they receive, that women play an important role in managing complaints of acts of violence that occur, and how to make a list of existing public service complaints. The knowledge provided during this advocacy training allowed every woman to understand the Security and Protection strategy in the event of violence. This is in line with Hudayana’s (2017) claim that women's resilience can be formed by working with the community in the context of advocating for change.

After all the material was delivered, the participants were divided into three groups according to their village, to discuss a case described by the facilitator. The discussion results of the case were then written on a flip-chart using the “Empathy Maps" method and presented to the groups. The activity using the "Empathy Maps" method is intended to strengthen women's capacity to manifest social capital, or to develop critical power regarding violence against women and to create social cohesion in society. Social cohesiveness results in trust and social attraction between others. Social attraction is the ability to achieve consensus and tends to be unidirectional. A set of beliefs and living practices that become the special identity of one social group and distinguish it from others is called culture (Hogg et al., 2017).
The female participants from three villages in the Cililin sub-district generated social capital by committing to be brave and take on a pro-social attitude in overcoming acts of violence against women. The social capital that was built among the female participants gave them strength in dealing with COVID-19, which is currently endemic. This strengthening occurred through the application of collective cultural values, which foster trust among community members so that social networks can be established. As the leader of the empowerment team said in the following interview excerpt:

The joys and sorrows felt in carrying out this activity are that we can still feel togetherness even in the midst of the current pandemic. Although they have to keep their distance from each other, this does not reduce the spirit of mutual cooperation, sympathy, and empathy among women. Without their enthusiasm, this activity will not run smoothly and successfully (Interview, Aeni, 2021).

Therefore, the strategy of building women’s resilience to face a threat of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic is closely related to strengthening social relations, reflected in good behavior, friendship, and mutual sympathy, close relationships, and cooperation between individuals in families who establish security and order in society.

Soft-skill Training as a Sustainable Women's Business Opportunity

Good community empowerment generally requires a process of mentoring and training. Assistance is needed because the object of empowerment is a diverse community with positive potential as well as problematic dynamics. Training can improve skills needed for development that will enhance the general welfare under current conditions (Najiah and Mahmeasy, 2021).

Women’s soft-skill development training was presented at the Patali Gumbira Empowerment session with the theme “I Am Gumbira.” The goal was to develop women’s skills in order to create independent business opportunities that can sustain the welfare of underprivileged women affected by COVID-19. This goal is in line with Niko (2020), who stated the need for a paradigm shift in community development by providing training or empowerment based on sharpening skills.

The intended training was hairdressing skills provided by Patali Gumbira empowerment partner, LPK Letje, and taught directly by professionals. In this hairdressing skills training, female participants from three Cililin Sub-districts were provided with recognition of various hair cutting tools, knowledge of how to use hair cutting tools, and awareness of various hairstyles and the proper techniques for producing them.

Such training is useful to produce independent business opportunities for women. As the team leader said in the following interview excerpt: “With this training activity, it is hoped that female participants will have the desire to be empowered by developing skills as a provision to support family economic resilience during this pandemic” (Interview, Ipah, 2021). This is in keeping with the view of Budiasmoro (2014) who states that “collective resilience can be built through a process of personal empowerment, recognizing the group's contribution to empowerment and the human development process. Concerning human development, basically, the concept of development must be based on empowerment which contains special elements such as the ability to meet basic living needs in the household.”

In this case, it is not enough to only provide capital in the form of material assistance for women affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, because this cannot last long. It is important for the government, both at the central and regional levels, to ensure that the assistance of small business activities takes the form of local community resilience built on local social capital (Budastra, 2020). Therefore, the implementation of this hairdressing training is one way to increase productivity for women, not only by guiding them in acquiring skills, but also by
helping them to creatively formulate joint solution steps that are urgently needed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Conclusion**

The social impacts that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic can be responded to by providing cooperative opportunities for all parties and by committing to justice and the protection of vulnerable groups, such as women. The empowerment of Patali Gumbira is intended to develop the ability and independence of women by utilizing their potential social capital to teach them to withstand the burden of problems created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Strengthening women's leadership capacity, advocacy training in preventing and handling cases of violence against women, and soft skill training as a sustainable women's business opportunity are all strategies to increase the resilience of women in the three Cililin sub-districts. This can be done by developing social capital in human resources through direct and indirect training and assistance. Social capital depends on general social virtues that help women in building survival strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires solidarity with local communities to work hand in hand with one another. Although further empowerment is still needed, this is a promising beginning.

**References**


