



Gender Transformation-Based Domestic Violence Victim Empowerment Model in North Aceh District

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ABSTRACT

The North Aceh Regency ranks second in domestic violence (DV) cases in the Aceh Province, following the city of Banda Aceh. This study examines a Gender Transformation-based Empowerment Model for Victims of Domestic Violence, aiming to analyze and describe an economic empowerment model that enables victims to enhance their welfare and independence. Employing qualitative research methods through a phenomenological approach and literature review, data were collected via interviews with representatives from the North Aceh Office of Social Affairs, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, local government stakeholders, and victims of domestic violence. The findings reveal that economic factors are the predominant causes of domestic violence in North Aceh. Government assistance in the region remains largely focused on legal and psychological support, while economic empowerment initiatives are still limited in scope. The implementation of a Gender Transformation-based economic empowerment model offers victims access to economic resources and helps to challenge prevailing societal norms and power structures that marginalize women. This approach promotes gender equality by enabling victims to participate more actively in economic and social spheres, including access to education, vocational training, and employment opportunities.

Keyword:

Empowerment Model,
Economic, Domestic
Violence Victims, Gender
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INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) is a critical social issue with far-reaching consequences for

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individuals, families, and communities. It encompasses controlling, coercive, or abusive behavior-whether physical, psychological, sexual, or financial in nature (Dabaghi et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, DV is often perceived as a private matter, which contributes to underreporting and leaves many victims trapped in a cycle of violence without sufficient support. The prevalence of violence against women is further exacerbated by structural factors, including patriarchal cultural norms, economic hardship, and narrow interpretations of religious teachings that can legitimize abusive behaviors (Muklir, 2021).

In such disadvantageous circumstances, women and children are frequently the primary victims, facing extreme vulnerability and powerlessness in confronting violence on their own (Hulley et al., 2023). This underscores the essential role of the government in intervening to protect women from violence and address systemic inequalities. A tangible manifestation of state intervention is reflected in the enactment of Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. In alignment with this national policy, the Aceh Provincial Government introduced Qanun No. 6 of 2009 concerning the Empowerment and Protection of Women. Additionally, Governor Decree No. 411.3/319/2003 of the Nanggroë Aceh Darussalam Province established the Integrated Service Center for the Empowerment of Women and Child Protection (P2TP2A), aimed at ensuring the protection and fulfillment of women's rights (Muklir, 2021).

Although such regulations and provisions have been introduced and enacted by the government, domestic violence remains unavoidable. Therefore, women need to be empowered to defend themselves and their rights. The policy in Aceh regarding domestic violence and women's empowerment faces various challenges. Although Aceh has a special legal framework as a region with special autonomy and the implementation of Islamic law, the protection of women from vulnerability-particularly in the context of domestic violence-remains insufficient. The economic position of women in Aceh is still relatively weak, as many depend solely on their husbands' income and feel ashamed to separate from them due to the perception that it would bring disgrace to the family. As a result, they cannot be independent and struggle to defend themselves. Ultimately, women are still often blamed due to the deeply rooted patriarchal culture within Acehnese families. Since domestic violence is generally driven by economic factors, there is a pressing need for protective measures for women victims-needs which current policies in Aceh have yet to adequately address. The significance of empowerment is highlighted in two contexts: first, by emphasizing the role of women in decision-making processes; and second, by analyzing the relationship between women's empowerment and its impact on men's behavior (Bagus, 2022).

Various studies on domestic violence have been conducted previously. For example, in North Aceh Regency, most cases of domestic violence are caused by inadequate economic resources to meet daily needs (Bagus, 2022). Nevertheless, support for victims in North Aceh remains limited to legal, health, psychological, and counseling services provided by the Social Services Agency and the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency. In a study conducted in Simpang Empat Cot Girek Village, Lhoksukon, North Aceh, Efriana (2013) found that domestic violence is a form of gender-based violence rooted in the subordination of women, who are viewed as inferior to men. Patriarchal culture continues to dominate in North Aceh, confining women to domestic roles and demanding obedience, which often results in the loss of autonomy. Certain violent behaviors are still regarded as 'normal' due to the belief that husbands have full authority over their wives as the heads of

households. This belief perpetuates a recurring cycle of domestic violence that remains difficult to break.

Previous research conducted by Muklir (2021) in North Aceh Regency revealed that the handling of domestic violence by the Integrated Service Centre for Women and Children Empowerment (P2TP2A) remains limited to providing legal, medical, psychological, and counselling support. However, such services have not been sufficient to address the underlying causes of domestic violence, particularly those linked to economic vulnerability. Without financial independence, victims often remain trapped in the cycle of violence. In this regard, a more comprehensive strategy that includes economic empowerment is necessary to ensure sustainable protection for victims (Guarnieri & Rainer, 2018).

The implementation of economic empowerment programmes, however, requires substantial funding to ensure victims gain access to capital, skills development, and continuous support systems. According to Muklir (2021), budgetary constraints have hindered the large-scale implementation of such initiatives in North Aceh Regency. This situation calls for stronger government commitment through increased budget allocations and cross-sectoral collaboration with private entities and non-governmental organisations to secure broader financial support. Economic empowerment, in this context, is essential for enhancing women's status within the family and society, enabling them to make autonomous decisions and escape abusive relationships (Dalal et al., 2022). Moreover, empowering women not only supports gender equality but also contributes to broader economic development by strengthening women's rights and participation (Purba, 2024).

This study explores the domestic violence response policy adopted by the North Aceh District Government and proposes an economic empowerment model for victims based on gender transformation. The Gender Transformation Theory (Hillenbrand et al., 2015) offers a comprehensive framework for analysing and promoting systemic change towards gender equality. According to the theory, sustainable gender transformation must occur across three interrelated levels: individual, systemic, and institutional. This multi-level and interdisciplinary approach allows for a deeper understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of gender relations, while also capturing the perspectives of relevant stakeholders in designing monitoring, evaluation, and empowerment systems. Gender transformation, in essence, constitutes a critical response to social structures and norms shaped by evolving political, cultural, economic, and ethnic contexts (Rasyidin & Aruni, 2016). Rashila Ramli argues that social constructions are strongly influenced by cultural values, religious beliefs, and traditional norms that often reinforce gender stereotypes, such as portraying women as naturally affectionate and submissive (Rasyidin & Aruni, 2016). Consequently, these constructs contribute to the continued marginalisation of women and their vulnerability to discrimination, particularly within the household setting.

The primary objective of gender transformation at the individual level is to raise awareness, enable women to access necessary resources, and foster their ability to make informed choices. This includes building the confidence, skills, and capacities required for women to assert their rights. At the systemic level, the transformation targets discriminatory practices, cultural beliefs, and social norms that sustain gender inequality. Changes at this level are structural in nature, aiming to dismantle patriarchal ideologies and long-standing conventions that have contributed to the marginalisation of women (Hillenbrand et al., 2015). Meanwhile, at the institutional level, efforts are directed towards promoting gender equality through the allocation of resources, reformation of organisational systems, and implementation of inclusive policies. Effective policy execution

requires gender-responsive policy support, greater representation of women in decision-making processes, and the development of accountability mechanisms.

This study provides theoretical insight into how gender transformation models can be adapted and integrated into strategies for the economic empowerment of women victims of domestic violence. These theoretical considerations also carry practical implications, including the development of empowerment programmes such as entrepreneurship training, mentorship initiatives, and advocacy efforts. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a reference for enhancing existing policies on the protection of women and children—particularly in addressing the gap related to economic empowerment. If effectively implemented, these measures can help reduce the stigma and negative stereotypes often attached to women victims of domestic violence.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to examine and facilitate preventive and responsive measures for victims of domestic violence in North Aceh Regency through an economic empowerment-based approach, in alignment with the 2020-2024 strategic targets set by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection to promote gender equality. Without addressing economic empowerment, efforts to support victims remain incomplete, as economic dependence limits their ability to rebuild their lives and defend their rights. Therefore, the development of an economic empowerment model based on Gender Transformation (GT), involving the relevant stakeholders within the North Aceh Regency Government, is crucial and merits comprehensive exploration. Silakan beri tahu jika Anda memerlukan versi Bahasa Indonesia atau ingin melanjutkan ke bagian berikutnya.

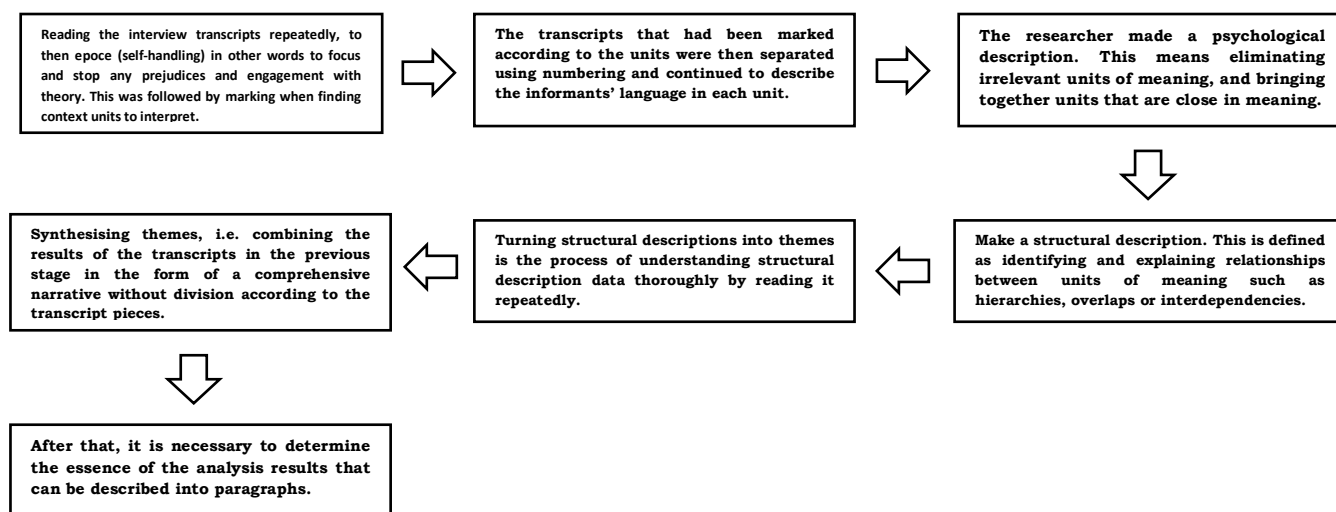
METHODS

The research employed qualitative method with phenomenological approach. Shorey (2022) states that this approach seeks to explore, in depth, the lived experiences of individuals who are the subjects of the study. The phenomenological method is essential for uncovering the underlying facts of a phenomenon and providing interpretive insight into its meaning (Waugh, 2005). In this context, the approach is applied to investigate real efforts to economically empower women and victims of domestic violence in North Aceh, based on an analysis of the experiences of individuals and groups, including the Social Service, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office of North Aceh Regency, the regional government, and other relevant stakeholders, as well as through a review of supporting documents.

This study utilized both primary and secondary data, which were collected using a variety of techniques (Herdiansyah, 2010):

1. Observation: Conducted through direct observation of the phenomenon as it naturally occurs.
2. Interview: This research adopts unstructured interviews, allowing open-ended conversations between the interviewer and informants, thereby enabling a more flexible and in-depth data collection process.
3. Documentation: Involving the collection of images, videos, and audio recordings as part of the research findings, alongside the analysis of documents sourced from governmental agencies, academic books, and journals.

The data analysis technique used in this study follows the perspective of Giorgi (2010), who focuses on phenomenological research methods. This approach is further enriched by the analytical framework proposed by Kahija (2018), resulting in a structured sequence of analytical stages as outlined below:



Source: Author, 2025

Graphic 1. Data Analysis Techniques

In conducting data analysis, this study has implemented researcher triangulation, namely involving several researchers to analyze the same data so that the analysis results are not biased (Fusch et al., 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The high incidence of domestic violence in North Aceh Regency, despite the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh, remains a significant concern for both the community and the government. Various contributing factors have been identified in the occurrence of domestic violence in the region, including economic hardship, early marriage through family-arranged unions, substance abuse, polygamous relationships, low educational attainment, and the persistence of a deeply rooted patriarchal culture.

To address this issue, the government needs to enhance the model of economic empowerment for victims of domestic violence. This effort should go beyond providing legal and psychological assistance, focusing instead on long-term, sustainable empowerment. Such an approach would enable victims-particularly those affected by economic vulnerabilities-to recover and attain independence, without remaining in abusive situations merely due to financial dependence on male partners (Safrudin, 2004). The husband's dominant position within the household is often reinforced by his role as the primary financial provider, while the wife's lack of economic autonomy exacerbates her subordination. Thus, achieving gender equality requires that women possess their own financial resources and attain educational levels comparable to those of their spouses (Efriana, 2013).

Historical perspective on gender equality in Acehnese society

The Acehnese people have long recognized the capabilities of Acehnese women, as evidenced by the historical role of the Inong Balee feminist movement—the largest women's movement in Aceh—which actively participated in the Free Aceh Movement. This involvement stands as significant proof of women's engagement in the struggle for self-liberation from colonial rule through a feminist lens. Broadly,

the feminist movement emerged to advocate for women's freedom, addressing the socio-political disadvantages faced by women who have historically been subordinated by men in various social, occupational, educational, and political domains, particularly in societies with entrenched patriarchal cultures (Rasyidin & Aruni, 2016).

The participation of Inong Balee in conflict resolution in Aceh is deeply intertwined with the collective aspiration of the Acehnese people for peace and prosperity. The contributions of Inong Balee in peace-building efforts have been commended by diverse groups throughout both colonial and post-colonial periods. Inong Balee played a pivotal role in defending Aceh against foreign invaders. The resilience demonstrated by Acehnese women in defending their religion, homeland, and honor during the Aceh conflict serves as an inspiring motivational example. This resilience is also reflected in the identity of Acehnese women, who are renowned for their religious devotion, bravery, and steadfastness in protecting their families, faith, and nation. The activism and agency of Acehnese women have been integral to Aceh's historical journey. Indeed, Aceh's historical achievements can be partially attributed to the crucial involvement of women, particularly through the Inong Balee movement (Rasyidin, 2019).

The feminist approach to conflict resolution adopted by the Inong Balee Movement in Aceh aligns with the principles of ethical feminism. Nugroho and Murtiningsih (2008) describe ethical feminism as a feminist school of thought that emphasizes the ethic of care. This ethic, typically associated with women, contrasts with the ethic of justice more commonly attributed to men. The ethic of care prioritizes empathy and sympathy in advocating for women's rights, consciously avoiding the use of violence, which distinguishes it from the liberal feminist framework.

Based on the historical context, Acehnese women have not been easily subjected to discrimination. Therefore, domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women as victims, should not occur, nor should they endure harsh treatment from their husbands. During the Aceh conflict, wives actively supported their husbands in the struggle for Aceh's and even Indonesia's independence. Empirical evidence indicates that domestic violence is often linked to low economic conditions, predominantly affecting families in middle to lower socioeconomic strata. Consequently, the government should implement economic empowerment models tailored for women or victims of domestic violence to enable financial independence and improve family economic support. An illustrative example is the economic empowerment initiatives by the Annisa Swasti Foundation in Yogyakarta. Since 1982, the foundation has promoted women's economic welfare through education, advocacy, training, entrepreneurship, leadership, and organizational development, particularly for female workers, although the anticipated outcomes have not yet been fully realized (Mutiar, 2017). Through such economic empowerment, even if wives choose not to pursue divorce, they can rebuild their households with a more stable economic foundation and thereby help prevent the recurrence of domestic violence.

Gender Transformation-Based Economic Empowerment Model for Domestic Violence Victims in North Aceh District

Women require alternative strategies that facilitate social transformation to effectively formulate the concept of women's empowerment on a global scale. As noted earlier, women's contributions are vital to the sustainability of human life, yet their social status remains subordinated and marginalized. The underrepresentation of women in senior positions, such as managerial roles, is a global issue affecting not only Indonesia but many countries worldwide (Burke et al., 2005, in Elfadhila & Kurniawan, 2020). Therefore, it is imperative for governments to provide adequate space and equal opportunities for women to express and realize their potential. A comprehensive approach is essential for the development of human resources aimed at women's economic empowerment. To this end, the author proposes a gender transformation-based economic empowerment model as a strategic intervention to liberate women from domestic violence.

The gender transformation-based empowerment model focuses on strengthening women's status and addressing the underlying gender injustices that catalyze domestic violence. It emphasizes the necessity of transforming mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors at both individual and community levels. Engaging a broad array of stakeholders-including victims, communities, and governmental and non-governmental organizations-the model seeks to create a supportive environment conducive to victims' recovery and economic empowerment.

The concept of gender transformation as a vehicle for women's empowerment, presupposes three main things (Guarnieri & Rainer, 2018):

1. Reforming institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men.
2. Increasing economic growth to stabilize incentives for equal resources and participation.
3. Taking proactive policy measures to address gender inequalities in resource control and political participation.

Since the 1990s, gender transformation has evolved as a strategic extension of the gender mainstreaming agenda within development processes. Gender mainstreaming operates as a dual-track approach integrating two key components: first, the incorporation of gender considerations into all policies and projects, aiming to achieve equality; and second, the implementation of specialized initiatives focused on women's empowerment with the goal of achieving empowerment outcomes. Gender transformation pertains to transformative changes addressing gender inequality (MacArthur et al., 2022), particularly by improving women's social position in relation to their contributions toward fostering peaceful and democratic societies (Shalihin & Firdaus, 2019).

Moser offers two elements of a framework for gender transformation. The first element is to make a clear distinction between "transformation" and "empowerment"

in the context of gender. Gender transformation refers to actions that are inherently political and concerned with structural changes in gender power relations. As such, it emphasizes collective action, contestation, and negotiation. Women's empowerment refers to gender mainstreaming, which describes how individual women increase their bargaining power to participate fully in economic and political life. The second element is the elaboration of a framework that specifically addresses gender transformation. It can be stated that the gender perspective through gender transformation is a process of empowering women to create human relations that are innately and fundamentally new, better, and more just. Therefore, the structural relationship, namely the exploitative economic relationship, must be changed toward an equity structure without exploitation. Hegemonic cultural relations need to be changed to a non-repressive political structure, and gender structure relations that dominate women must be changed to a liberating structure (Shalihin & Firdaus, 2019).

Analysing the Phenomenon of Gender Transformation-Based Economic Empowerment of Domestic Violence Victims in North Aceh

The phenomenon observed in North Aceh Regency reveals that women are often compelled to engage in work to fulfill household needs and sustain their families due to pressure from their husbands, who bear the responsibility of family support. These women typically work as farmers, small traders, and in other similar occupations. Due to the urgent nature of their work, their tasks are often labor-intensive, regarded as low-status, and yield less profit compared to men (Shalihin & Firdaus, 2019). Meanwhile, protection measures for these women have not yet received optimal attention. However, economic conditions that entrap lower-middle-class families necessitate support through economic independence for married couples, ensuring neither partner feels burdened by the other (Shalihin & Firdaus, 2019). According to research findings, economic factors significantly contribute as the primary basis for the frequent incidence of domestic violence cases in North Aceh. The Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs stated that:

“In North Aceh, most cases of domestic violence are caused by economic factors. Therefore, victims of domestic violence, who often come from families facing economic difficulties, need increased economic empowerment to achieve economic independence. Through economic improvement, they can be freed from the bondage of domestic violence” (M, personal interview, 10 June 2024)

A domestic violence victim in North Aceh stated the needs of such victims as follows:

"So far, the government has paid attention to us victims of domestic violence, although primarily in terms of legal protection and psychological support. However, victims of domestic violence also require economic empowerment because through economic empowerment activities, we victims are no longer dependent on the perpetrator" (B, personal interview, June 20, 2024).

In this study, it was found that victims of domestic violence acknowledged receiving assistance from the North Aceh government, specifically from the Social Service, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection agencies. This support includes legal advocacy and psychological assistance provided by psychiatrists to help heal psychological wounds. Additionally, health facilities are provided to assist with healing physical injuries. However, it is evident that merely providing necessary assistance to victims is insufficient. There must be an integration of a sense of self-security and sustainable economic support through empowerment activities to enable victims to live independently and no longer rely on their husbands. The limitations faced by women as individuals (human capital)-such as in education, work experience and skills, employment opportunities, and ideological factors-mean that victims of domestic violence tend to focus on economic empowerment through the enhancement of skills, increased income, and the ability to manage their own finances. This process fosters greater self-confidence and aids in psychological trauma recovery. When these women improve their self-confidence and self-awareness, they gain the capital of independence, which is a crucial aspect of entrepreneurship (Vukovic et al., 2023).

The phenomenon described above can be addressed through a gender transformation model, which serves as a holistic framework for realizing economic empowerment. This model can be applied at three levels, as follows (Mcdougall et al., 2023):

1. Local level: households, groups, and communities.

In the context of economic empowerment for victims of domestic violence, activities at this level may include skills training, cooperatives, financial literacy, and mentoring. This level emphasizes changing gender norms and practices within the individual's immediate environment, namely households, groups, and communities. Economic empowerment actions at this level can be reflected in:

- a) Skills training programme : conducting business and entrepreneurship skills training for victims of domestic violence and married women. This point is supported by statements from informants from the community of victims of domestic violence and the Office of Social Affairs, Women's Empowerment and Children in North Aceh through mentioning that there have been skills or training provided by the local government in this case the North Aceh Office of Social Affairs, Women's Empowerment and Children such as sewing, cooking and selling skills.
- b) Savings and loan groups : the formation of community-based groups specifically for women to save and lend to enable access to modest capital and encourage financial independence. This is in accordance with the view of the Village Head or Geuchik Tingkeum who sought business capital support for victims to improve the economy, which actually succeeded in increasing the Victim's Independence. The amount of domestic savings is closely related to financial intelligence and income (Bhutta et al., 2021).

The North Aceh Office of Social Affairs, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection reported that micro- credit loans are provided by the non-governmental organization Relawan Perempuan Kemanusiaan Mandiri, with monthly installment plans. However, there has been no initiative to educate victims or women in North Aceh on financial management, which is a mutual hope of both the government and participants of economic empowerment training programs. The government refrains from providing direct financial assistance to victims to avoid fostering dependency, which can hinder the success of economic empowerment initiatives. Furthermore, it was observed that business capital provided to support economic empowerment lacked sustainability; when the capital ceased, the businesses often failed.

This situation highlights the anomaly and underscores the importance of implementing a savings and loan program specifically designed for community members or women's groups, including domestic violence victims or wives exclusively. Such a program would allow group members to directly benefit and maintain control over the management. This aligns with research by Gash (2017), which states that savings groups effectively enhance the role of financing in overcoming financial constraints faced by the involved parties.

- a) Financial literacy: Organizing education or workshops regarding household financial management, budgeting, and financial planning, while emphasizing the importance of control over financial resources as a form of domestic violence prevention. However, financial literacy initiatives within the economic empowerment programs for domestic violence victims in North Aceh have not yet been implemented. The introduction of financial literacy is an expectation expressed by informants from the Social Service, Women's Empowerment and Child Protection office, as well as by the community of victims. Through financial literacy, economic empowerment efforts can train women to independently manage their finances. This necessity is supported by research from Hossain et al. (2022), which asserts that education in income management is critical since poor financial management negatively impacts business sustainability.
- b) Mentoring programme: providing emotional and practical support in achieving economic independence. Geuchik Tingkeum explained that so far the assistance programme carried out for victims of domestic violence involves various parties working together. The assistance is carried out from the village level, and involves authorised agencies to resolve the problems faced by victims. Then the agency said that the assistance program (psychological, economic, and legal) for victims of domestic violence is in fact also in the realm of NGOs to provide legal assistance, counselling and shelter.
- c) Mentoring Program: Providing both emotional and practical support to help victims achieve economic independence. According to Geuchik Tingkeum, current assistance programs for domestic violence victims involve collaboration among various parties and occur starting from the village level, involving authorized agencies to address victim issues. The assistance

programs include psychological, economic, and legal aids, often supported by NGOs providing legal counseling and shelter.

Notably, the Social Services, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection office typically acts after receiving police reports to implement protective and empowerment measures. Nevertheless, this assistance has yet to fully promote economic independence, largely because it is provided only by the Social Service office, and there is insufficient clarity regarding the program's evaluation. Research demonstrates that mentoring programs combining economic and psychological support can reduce domestic violence by 20-30% (Campo & Steinert, 2020).

2. Meso and macro levels: market, state and society.

Actions taken to address economic empowerment and prevent domestic violence at the structural level may include economic protection policies, affirmative employment programs, political awareness campaigns, and reforms of the legal system. This level of intervention encompasses the market, state, and societal domains, focusing on broad structural and systemic changes in gender relations. It particularly emphasizes strengthening regulatory frameworks and developing service systems. In North Aceh, several programs fall under this category, such as protection policies advocating for rules that safeguard women's rights, including economic rights in marriage and divorce, by promoting policies that facilitate support for victims. However, effective communication of these policies remains a challenge. According to relevant agencies, many community members, including village officials, do not fully understand Qanun No. 9 of 2019 concerning Women's Empowerment and Child Protection. This lack of understanding is compounded by the perception that existing regulations are based on Western values, which are seen as conflicting with Acehnese cultural norms.

In response, the local office has taken the initiative to establish and offer services through a referral agency designed to assist victims of domestic violence in accessing the Social Service, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection office in North Aceh district. This initiative highlights the importance of comprehensive victim protection policies that address legal, social, and economic aspects. Such integrated and cross- sectoral cooperation is shown to be more effective in preventing domestic violence and fostering more positive outcomes in empowerment (Alsina et al., 2024).

- a) Legal System Reform: Efforts should be made to improve the judicial handling of domestic violence cases, including recognizing economic abuse as a form of domestic violence. Aceh Qanun No. 09/2019 provides protection encompassing psychological, economic, and legal dimensions. The Social Service office acknowledges the North Aceh DPRK's initiative to revise the qanun on the protection of children and women as a significant measure to enhance victim protection. It is essential that existing regulations consider the economic impact on victims, ensuring comprehensive legal protection (Ismamati & Rahayu, 2023).

- b) Public Awareness Campaign: Campaigns should be launched to emphasize the importance of women's economic independence and its connection to preventing domestic violence. These campaigns utilize mass and social media to challenge gender stereotypes related to economic roles within households. Social media plays a crucial role in domestic violence awareness campaigns (Ihekwoaba, 2023), facilitating the interaction between the public and government through citizen engagement characterized by two-way communication (Purwadi et al., 2019). The campaign is already underway, with social services forming support groups of domestic violence survivors to provide vital information to women experiencing domestic violence. Such public awareness campaigns represent efforts to demand public interest, a cornerstone of governance (Reza, 2016).

Despite these efforts, victims of domestic violence express that educational campaigns about domestic violence remain insufficient, including guidance on reporting incidents. Support for victims is often minimal, with reports sometimes mishandled and cases taking a long time to resolve. The community has therefore suggested establishing at least one NGO dedicated to advocacy and campaigns to increase public awareness about victim protection. Moreover, these NGOs could bring obstacles faced by victims to public hearings during the legislative planning and drafting processes conducted by the North Aceh Parliament.

3. Intra-organizational level: the development organisation

Ensuring that the economic empowerment program designed by relevant parties addresses the special needs of domestic violence victims is essential. This includes integrating safety and psychological support components within the empowerment initiatives. Findings from this study reveal that the objective of these programs is to transition victims away from dependency on government assistance by equipping them with skills to generate income, manage their finances, boost confidence, and recover from psychological trauma.

From the perspective of the agency involved, economic independence is crucial. However, there exists a contrasting perspective known as resource theory, which challenges the marital dependency theory that women's economic empowerment reduces the potential for violence. Resource theory suggests that increasing women's financial resources may clash with traditional gender roles, potentially provoking competition and violence as husbands seek to assert their status (Campo & Steinert, 2020). Thus, it is imperative to prioritize women's safety by thoughtfully designing empowerment programs and closely monitoring conflict or violence risks within families.

The research findings highlight a three-tiered economic empowerment model for victims of gender-based violence in North Aceh District: local, meso-macro, and intra-organizational levels. At the local level, skills training and efforts to provide access to capital have been implemented; however, gaps remain concerning financial literacy and program sustainability. At the meso-macro level, although legal reforms and public awareness campaigns have been initiated, there is a need

to improve policy communication and enhance support mechanisms for victims. Lastly, at the intra-organizational level, further development is required to embed safety and psychological support comprehensively into economic empowerment program designs.

This study reinforces the need for a holistic and sustainable approach to achieving women's economic independence and effectively preventing domestic violence. Aligned with the gender transformation framework, such an approach demands structural, social, and cultural changes to realize true gender equality. Gender transformation efforts extend beyond building individual women's capacities—they require fundamental shifts in social norms, cultural values, and patriarchal power structures, often at the root of domestic violence and economic dependency. In North Aceh, with its rich cultural and religious values, empowerment strategies must incorporate local value-based approaches to ensure greater acceptance and long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the empowerment model for victims of domestic violence based on Gender Transformation (GT) is a comprehensive and holistic framework essential for economic empowerment efforts to address domestic violence driven by economic factors. The GT-based empowerment model strives to transform societal perceptions by granting victims access to economic resources and challenging prevailing social norms that continue to marginalize women. This model facilitates shifts in power structures underpinning gender inequality, creating space for victims to engage in economic and social spheres, gain opportunities for education, training, and employment, and enhance self-esteem and confidence through economic independence, ultimately enabling escape from harmful situations. In North Aceh District, the government, through the Social Service, Women's Empowerment, and Child Protection agency, has so far implemented limited and non-massive efforts to mobilize economic empowerment for victims of domestic violence, hindered primarily by budget constraints and the need for external support to fully develop and sustain these empowerment programs. The GT empowerment model is designed to impact economic empowerment at multiple levels: local, meso- macro, and intra-organizational. It fosters integrated harmony between economic independence and freedom from the economic causes of domestic violence. Achieving gender equality and reducing domestic violence cases necessitates comprehensive, sustainable, and tiered economic empowerment that operates through both bottom-up and top-down approaches.

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