

Research Article

Women, Peace, and Education: Gendered Dimensions of Multicultural Harmony in Singkawang

Ayu Gintari^{1*}

¹ Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author: e-mail: ayu.gintari@gmail.com

Abstract: This study analyzes the role of women in sustaining social harmony and strengthening multicultural education within the multiethnic society of Singkawang through a critical literature review approach. By integrating the Feminist Peace Theory and Multicultural Education Theory, this research examines both national and international scholarly works that explore women's contributions to peacebuilding and multicultural education in Southeast Asia. The review reveals that women serve as cultural mediators, peace educators, and social innovators through interethnic and interfaith engagements such as cultural festivals, interreligious forums, and community-based initiatives. Despite notable progress in promoting multicultural education in Singkawang, gender perspectives remain insufficiently integrated into educational practices. Through a synthesis of the reviewed literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework of Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE), comprising three interrelated dimensions: women's empowerment in educational and social leadership, empathy-based interethnic learning, and the integration of gender equality into curricula and school culture. The model underscores the strategic role of women as transformative agents and peace educators in multiethnic societies. The findings provide significant implications for the development of gender-sensitive and inclusive educational policies in Indonesia.

Keywords: Gender Equality; Multicultural Education; Peace; Social Harmony; Women

1. Introduction

Indonesia is recognized as one of the most ethnically, religiously, and culturally diverse nations in the world. This diversity renders multicultural education and peacebuilding two strategic agendas for sustaining the nation's social cohesion. In the global context, the discourse of education for harmony has become increasingly prominent as identity-based conflicts and social inequalities continue to challenge humanistic values worldwide. UNESCO (2022) emphasizes that education must serve as a key instrument for nurturing tolerance, empathy, and the capacity to live together within plural societies. Within this diversity, women hold a particularly significant social role. Numerous studies have shown that women not only function as transmitters of cultural values but also as peace agents at the community level (Ellerby, 2013; Krause et al., 2018). From the perspective of Feminist Peace Theory, women's participation in peace processes is not merely an expression of gender justice but a prerequisite for achieving inclusive and sustainable peace. Women possess unique social capacities to mediate interethnic relations through domestic, cultural, and informal educational activities, dimensions often overlooked in formal state policies (Heathcote, 2018). Singkawang City in West Kalimantan represents one of Indonesia's most tangible examples of a multiethnic society, home to three major ethnic groups: Malay, Dayak, and Chinese. Widely known as Indonesia's "City of Tolerance," Singkawang has earned its reputation for maintaining peaceful interethnic and interreligious relations. However, previous studies have indicated that this harmony is not entirely devoid of latent tensions or symbolic boundaries (Buwono et al., 2024).

In everyday life, subtle social frictions remain visible in cultural representations, socio-economic disparities among ethnic groups, and social dynamics within educational

Received: May 22, 2025
Revised: July 20, 2025
Accepted: September 19, 2025
Published: November 21, 2025
Curr. Ver.: November 21, 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.
Submitted for possible open
access publication under the
terms and conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution
(CC BY SA) license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

institutions. Within this context, women play an essential yet often underdocumented role. At the community level, they serve as key actors in preserving harmony through social activities, child education, and interfaith initiatives such as dialogues, cross-ethnic associations, and joint community service. Nevertheless, the contributions of women to social cohesion and multicultural education remain insufficiently explored in Indonesian academic discourse, particularly within multiethnic urban contexts such as Singkawang. The Multicultural Education Theory developed by Banks (2015) highlights the importance of equity pedagogy and prejudice reduction in the educational system. This framework resonates with the concept of inclusive transformation within Feminist Peace Theory, which situates gender equality and social empathy as fundamental pillars of sustainable peacebuilding. Therefore, integrating these two theoretical perspectives becomes crucial for understanding how education and women's social roles can collectively foster harmony in plural societies. Empirical studies by Krause et al. (2018) and Buranajaroenkij (2020) further reveal that women's participation in peacebuilding across Southeast Asia faces three persistent challenges: limited access to decision-making structures, cultural stereotypes surrounding women's roles, and insufficient policy support for gender integration in education and social processes. Similar dynamics are evident in Indonesia, where educational and social development policies remain only partially sensitive to gender and multicultural dimensions. To address this gap, the present study undertakes a critical literature analysis of recent research examining women's roles, multicultural education, and social harmony. The study is guided by three main questions. First, it explores how women function as peace agents within the multiethnic context of Singkawang. Second, it investigates the integration of gender equality into multicultural education, examining the ways in which gender considerations are addressed in educational practices. Lastly, the study looks at how local socio-cultural innovations contribute to strengthening interethnic harmony, specifically through community-based education. These guiding questions aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of women, gender equality, and socio-cultural innovations in fostering peace and harmony in a multiethnic society.

Theoretically, this study combines two major frameworks, Feminist Peace Theory and Multicultural Education Theory, to construct a conceptual model of Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE), positioning women as strategic actors in both education and social life. Practically, the study aims to contribute to educational policy development, women's empowerment in multiethnic communities, and the formulation of socially grounded strategies for promoting harmony and gender justice in Indonesia

2. Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

Feminist Peace Theory

Feminist Peace Theory emphasizes the interconnection between gender equality and sustainable peace. This theoretical framework argues that the inclusion of women in peace processes enhances the quality and longevity of peace agreements, as women's social roles are closely linked to care ethics, empathy, and relational dialogue (Ellerby, 2013; Heathcote, 2018). According to Reardon (1996) and Noddings (2012), feminist perspectives redefine peace not as the mere absence of conflict, but as the presence of justice and social well-being grounded in human relationships. Within this framework, women's participation in informal peacebuilding, through education, community engagement, and interfaith collaboration, constitutes a critical form of "everyday peacebuilding." This theory provides the conceptual foundation for analyzing women's agency as peace educators and cultural mediators in Singkawang.

Multicultural Education Theory

Multicultural Education Theory, as articulated by Banks (2015), advocates for equity pedagogy and the transformation of school culture to promote justice across ethnic, cultural, and gender lines. It emphasizes five key dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture. Scholars such as Freire (2018) and Anderson & Collins (2020) further highlight that multicultural education is inherently political, it must address power relations and social inequalities rather than simply celebrate diversity. In multiethnic contexts like Singkawang, this theory supports the integration of cultural pluralism and gender equality into educational practice as mutually reinforcing principles.

Intersectional and Peace Education Perspectives

The intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1991) complements these theories by revealing how gender, ethnicity, and social class interact to shape women's experiences and opportunities in peacebuilding. Peace education, as discussed by Harris & Morrison (2013) and Burns & Aspeslagh (2017), shares similar goals: to nurture empathy, cooperation, and conflict transformation skills. Together, these perspectives form the analytical backbone for understanding how women's educational roles contribute to sustaining multicultural harmony in Singkawang.

Review of Related Studies

Women and Peacebuilding

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that women's participation in peace processes leads to more durable and inclusive outcomes (Krause et al., 2018; UN Women, 2023). In Southeast Asia, Buranajaroenkij (2020) found that women's grassroots leadership, through informal community networks, plays a pivotal role in bridging ethnic and religious divides. Ellerby (2013) similarly argues that women's peace work often occurs outside formal structures, utilizing relational and moral authority to influence social cohesion. These insights resonate with the Singkawang context, where women's informal leadership sustains everyday harmony among Malay, Dayak, and Chinese communities.

Multicultural Education in Indonesia

Studies on multicultural education in Indonesia reveal that schools increasingly promote interethnic collaboration but often neglect the gender dimension. Research by Muzammil and Mariyadi (2025) found that multicultural education in Singkawang primarily focuses on ethnic and religious tolerance, while gender equity remains peripheral. Tetep & Dahlena (2024) emphasize the need for peace education grounded in social skills and empathy, suggesting that affective learning is crucial for long-term cohesion. However, as Banks (2015) and Heathcote (2018) highlight, without integrating gender justice into the curriculum and institutional culture, multicultural education risks reinforcing existing hierarchies.

Gaps in Current Literature

Despite a growing body of literature on multiculturalism and women's roles in peacebuilding, there remains a conceptual gap in linking gender perspectives with multicultural education frameworks. Most existing research treats gender and multiculturalism as separate domains, rarely exploring their intersection as a unified educational paradigm. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to urban plural settings such as Singkawang, where peace is maintained not through state-led initiatives but through community-level, women-led practices. This study addresses these gaps by synthesizing feminist and multicultural perspectives into a unified conceptual model: Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE).

Conceptual Integration and State-of-the-Art

Recent scholarship has moved toward recognizing education as a transformative tool for peace and gender equality (UNESCO, 2022; Anderson & Collins, 2020). Yet, few studies have operationalized this recognition into a concrete conceptual model that integrates both feminist and multicultural approaches. By combining Feminist Peace Theory and Multicultural Education Theory, this research advances the current state of knowledge through the formulation of the GMPE model, which conceptualizes education as both a medium for intergroup empathy and a mechanism for social transformation. The model situates women not merely as participants but as transformative agents in shaping multicultural harmony through education, thus offering a novel theoretical synthesis within peace and education studies.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the critical literature review method. This approach was selected because the study's primary objective is not to collect empirical field data but to comprehend, compare, and synthesize relevant scholarly findings concerning women, peace, and multicultural education. Through this method, the researcher seeks to trace conceptual relationships among existing theories, deepen the understanding of socio-cultural contexts, and construct a new conceptual model derived from the integration of prior research.

Research Design and Approach

The critical literature review emphasizes a systematic and in-depth analysis of previous studies to identify patterns, gaps, and new directions within a given field of knowledge. Unlike the systematic literature review, which tends to be quantitatively structured and statistical, the critical approach prioritizes reflective and interpretive analysis that integrates theory, context, and social values (Snyder, 2019). This method is particularly suitable for conceptual and sociological studies, as it enables a nuanced understanding of how gendered dynamics and multicultural education intersect within diverse social realities.

Sources and Selection Criteria

The data for this study were drawn from seven primary academic sources, which include both national and international journal articles published between 2013 and 2025. The selection of these sources was guided by three main criteria: first, their relevance to the topics of women, multicultural education, and peacebuilding in Southeast Asia; second, their academic credibility, as evidenced by their publication in reputable journals such as those indexed in SINTA 2 or Scopus; and third, their conceptual contribution, which aligns with the study's goal of offering a comparative synthesis of the existing literature.

The reviewed literature includes works by Buwono et al. (2024), Muzammil and Mariyadi (2025), and Tetep & Dahlena (2024), which focus on multicultural education in Singkawang; as well as studies by Ellerby (2013), Krause et al. (2018), Heathcote (2018), and Buranajaroenkij (2020), which examine women's participation in peacebuilding across the Asian region. Collectively, these sources represent a comprehensive scope encompassing local, national, and global dimensions.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis process was conducted in three major stages. The first stage, Literature Selection, involved identifying and collecting relevant journal articles from academic databases such as Taylor & Francis, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and the Indonesian Garuda Portal. Each article was assessed for its focus, methodological rigor, and relevance to the study's core themes, ensuring that the selected literature was comprehensive and aligned with the research objectives.

The second stage, Thematic Analysis, focused on identifying recurring themes across the selected literature using the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). During this stage, three key thematic categories were identified: 1) women's roles as cultural mediators and peace educators; 2) gender integration in multicultural education; and 3) local socio-cultural innovations for harmony. This thematic organization allowed for a structured synthesis of insights, providing clarity in understanding the interrelated perspectives from various scholarly sources.

In the final stage, Conceptual Synthesis, the study's findings were integrated with its theoretical frameworks Feminist Peace Theory and Multicultural Education Theory. This synthesis led to the formulation of the conceptual model of Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE), which highlights how women contribute to reinforcing social harmony and promoting inclusive education in multiethnic societies. This model offers a new perspective on the role of gender and education in fostering peace and understanding in diverse communities.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, source triangulation was applied by cross-analyzing results from multiple studies set in different contexts. Furthermore, the analysis was conducted with an emphasis on reflexivity, acknowledging the researcher's theoretical standpoint and interpretive assumptions. This reflective process enhances transparency and minimizes subjective bias, ensuring that interpretations are grounded in verifiable academic reasoning rather than personal conjecture. The adoption of this rigorous approach guarantees that the conceptual conclusions drawn from this review are methodologically sound and can serve as a credible foundation for further empirical and theoretical development.

4. Results and Discussion

Women as Cultural Mediators and Peace Educators

The multiethnic context of Singkawang demonstrates the strategic position of women as cultural mediators who sustain social cohesion through everyday practices of empathy and cooperation. Within the tripartite composition of Malay, Dayak, and Chinese communities, women often emerge as central figures in social and cultural activities that bridge identity differences. Their involvement, while rarely institutionalized, stems from community-based solidarity and deeply rooted kinship values that facilitate intergroup understanding and trust. Women's participation is particularly visible in interethnic cultural festivals such as Cap Go Meh and Gawai Dayak. These events, coordinated largely by women across different ethnic and religious backgrounds, serve as inclusive spaces for cross-cultural dialogue and symbolic negotiation. As observed by Buwono et al. (2024), social harmony in Singkawang is sustained more effectively by informal community networks many of which are initiated and maintained by women, than by formal state institutions. Through seemingly simple activities such as children's education, joint community service, and interethnic social gatherings, women engage in what can be described as social diplomacy, reproducing mutual trust across ethnic boundaries. From a feminist theoretical perspective, women's involvement in peacebuilding represents a distinctive form of social agency. Ellerby (2013) emphasizes that women often articulate peace through moral and relational practices rather than through formal political structures. They construct dialogic and empathetic social networks grounded in shared lived experiences. This aligns with Heathcote's (2018) concept of everyday peacebuilding, in which peace is cultivated through daily acts of cooperation, mutual respect, and care within diverse communities. In Singkawang, such practices are evident in interfaith women's groups who organize collective social activities without emphasizing religious or ethnic divisions, thereby embodying inclusive cultural pluralism.

Women's contribution as peace educators extends beyond the public domain into the familial sphere. Within households, women serve as the first educators in shaping children's values of equality, tolerance, and compassion. Muzammil and Mariyadi (2025) argue that multicultural education is not confined to formal institutions; rather, it can be most effective when embedded in domestic and community contexts. Through child-rearing, storytelling, and moral instruction, women transmit intercultural understanding and cultivate empathy across generations. Empirical evidence from international research reinforces the relevance of women's peace roles in the local Singkawang context. Krause et al. (2018) demonstrate that women's participation in peace processes significantly increases the likelihood of long-term peace sustainability, as they bring perspectives grounded in care, social inclusion, and emotional intelligence. In Singkawang, women exercise similar approaches by resolving differences through social engagement rather than political confrontation, transforming potential conflict into cooperation. Beyond their social influence, women also perform a symbolic role in representing harmony within the public sphere. As Buranajaroenkij (2020) observes in her study of Southeast Asian plural societies, women are frequently portrayed as icons of interethnic unity an embodiment of moral strength and cultural resilience. In Singkawang, this symbolism communicates a collective moral message that diversity is not a source of division but a shared foundation for coexistence and mutual respect. Women's active participation in public and educational life produces transformative effects on local social structures. In assuming roles as cultural organizers, youth mentors, and facilitators of interethnic dialogue, they challenge patriarchal boundaries that traditionally limit women's access to public spaces. Their participation represents a shift from passive domestic guardianship toward active social agency, redefining women as creators of social value and catalysts of cultural renewal. Analyzed through the lens of Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, 2015), women's contributions in Singkawang demonstrate that multicultural education transcends formal schooling. It manifests in community-based practices that function as a hidden curriculum a set of informal pedagogies that teach social skills such as empathy, cooperation, and intercultural communication. These practices embody the essence of peace education, enabling individuals to develop the competence to "live together" within a plural society.

The roles of women in Singkawang reveal a synthesis between social and pedagogical functions. They simultaneously operate as cultural mediators who sustain interethnic networks and as informal educators who nurture the moral and emotional foundations of peace. Within this dynamic, the concept of education for harmony acquires its contextual meaning: an educational process that extends beyond knowledge transmission into social

action fostering cohesion, justice, and mutual recognition. Thus, women in Singkawang are not merely preservers of cultural continuity or social stability; they are transformative actors who redefine the meaning of peace in a multicultural society. Their everyday practices illuminate that sustainable harmony does not emerge solely from state policy or institutional mechanisms, but from empathetic, equitable, and community-driven engagements that affirm diversity as a moral and social strength.

Gender Integration in Multicultural Education

Findings from the literature review reveal that the implementation of multicultural education in Singkawang has shown notable progress over the past two decades. Schools in the region have increasingly incorporated interethnic initiatives such as cultural exchanges, joint religious celebrations, and collaborative social projects among students. However, the gender dimension has not yet received proportional attention in either the design or practice of multicultural education. As observed by Muzammil and Mariyadi (2025), most teachers in Singkawang interpret multicultural education primarily as an effort to foster tolerance across ethnic and religious groups, without connecting it to the principles of gender equality and justice. This pattern reflects a broader tendency in Indonesia's educational system, where multicultural approaches are often detached from gender discourse. Yet, as Banks (2015) argues in *Multicultural Education Theory*, true multicultural education does not merely celebrate diversity but challenges the social hierarchies that sustain inequality. In this sense, gender integration becomes a necessary component of multicultural transformation expanding equity from cultural inclusion to structural justice within education.

Theoretical Integration between Multiculturalism and Gender Equality

Multicultural education encompasses five core dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture (Banks, 2015). Among these, two dimensions equity pedagogy and empowering culture are most relevant to the gender question. Equity pedagogy requires teachers to adapt their instructional methods so that all students, regardless of ethnicity or gender, can participate fully and meaningfully in the learning process. Meanwhile, empowering culture calls for institutional environments that support social justice through inclusive systems and norms. When these dimensions are examined through a feminist lens, multicultural education becomes not merely an educational framework but a vehicle for social emancipation. Ellerby (2013) underscores that women's involvement in education should extend beyond the role of beneficiaries to that of decision-makers and agenda-setters. In the context of Singkawang, this implies the creation of leadership opportunities for female teachers, principals, and community educators who can shape policies responsive to both cultural diversity and gender equality.

Female Teachers as Agents of Transformation

Female teachers hold a strategic position in translating multicultural and gender-equity values into classroom practices. Tetep & Dahlena (2024) argue that effective peace education requires not only cognitive understanding but also the development of social skills, empathy, dialogue, and collaboration that cultivate humanistic awareness. Female educators, with their strong affective and relational capacities, are particularly well-suited to facilitate these processes. Through dialogic pedagogy, role-playing, and reflective learning, they can help students internalize diversity as a shared human experience rather than a source of division. Nevertheless, enabling female teachers to become transformative agents requires structural support from the education system. In Singkawang, many women educators still face institutional barriers such as limited access to leadership training and minimal participation in policy formulation. Heathcote (2018) stresses that access to public spaces and leadership roles is a crucial precondition for women to exercise transformative influence in peacebuilding. Therefore, integrating gender into multicultural education must go beyond curriculum reform it demands the reconfiguration of institutional culture to create a gender-sensitive environment where women can serve as educators, decision-makers, and moral exemplars.

Transformative Curriculum and Value Reconstruction

School curricula in multiethnic societies such as Singkawang hold vast potential to internalize gender equality through contextual integration. The transformative curriculum model proposed by Banks (2015) and further developed by Krause et al. (2018) in their study on inclusive peace education emphasizes not only cultural representation but also the critical interrogation of stereotypes embedded in textbooks and teaching practices. For instance, women are often portrayed narrowly in domestic roles, while their leadership in community, public life, and peacebuilding remains underrepresented. Reframing such narratives within curricula is essential for fostering critical awareness and social inclusivity. Buranajaroenkij

(2020) observes that education in Southeast Asia frequently adheres to a paradigm of “formal harmony” that conceals structural inequalities. In this regard, curriculum reconstruction must aim to present social realities more honestly acknowledging that harmony is not the absence of tension, but the fair management of difference. This pedagogical reconstruction can be operationalized through collaborative and participatory learning models where boys and girls work together as equals in multicultural projects, civic debates, or community engagement initiatives. Such practices foster reflective consciousness that gender differences should never translate into hierarchy or exclusion.

Schools as Spaces for the Socialization of Equality

In a plural society, schools function as social laboratories where the values of tolerance, equity, and justice are tested in daily interactions. Singkawang, with its relatively stable interethnic relations, offers a fertile ground for developing a gender-just model of multiculturalism. Mariyadi (2025) highlight that community-based education involving parents, religious leaders, and women’s organizations is more effective in cultivating gender awareness than top-down policy interventions. Collaboration between schools and local initiatives such as the Interfaith Women’s Forum in Singkawang can enrich multicultural education with gender perspectives rooted in lived community experience. Furthermore, the lived narratives of Singkawang’s women as cultural mediators can be transformed into learning resources within formal subjects such as history, sociology, or civic education. By integrating these local stories into the curriculum, schools can demonstrate that social harmony is achieved through cooperation and mutual recognition rather than dominance.

Direction of Transformation: From Inclusivity to Equity

Integrating gender into multicultural education must transcend the rhetoric of diversity and move toward structural transformation. Education should cultivate not only tolerance toward difference but also critical awareness of inequality. Within this framework, women play a pivotal role in shifting the paradigm of education from a tolerance-based approach to an equity-based approach. Hence, gender-sensitive multicultural education in Singkawang should not be seen merely as an educational initiative but as a broader social strategy for building a peaceful, equitable, and just society. By empowering female educators, reconstructing curricula, and nurturing gender-responsive school environments, education can serve as a foundation for sustainable social transformation at both local and national levels.

Local Socio-Cultural Innovation for Harmony

The literature review reveals that women in Singkawang occupy a central role in creating and sustaining community-based socio-cultural innovations. These innovations do not originate from formal policy interventions but evolve organically from lived social practices at the community level. Through participation in interethnic and interfaith activities such as interreligious dialogues, community service initiatives, and cultural festivals like Cap Go Meh and Naik Dango women serve as both architects and catalysts of collective narratives that celebrate coexistence across identities. This role demonstrates that women are not merely beneficiaries of social harmony but also the principal producers of peace values. In this sense, they act as cultural agents who mobilize social, cultural, and symbolic capital to sustain social integration. Heathcote (2018) refers to this as non-militarized peacebuilding, a peace process enacted not through political authority or coercive mechanisms but through education, art, and civic engagement. This approach situates women as peace actors who animate harmony through everyday social practice rather than through formalized policy or elite negotiation.

Women as Architects of Peace Networks

The social fabric of Singkawang illustrates how women build organic and sustainable interethnic networks grounded in trust and reciprocity. They organize and lead groups such as the Interfaith Women’s Communication and Tolerance Forum and Majelis Taklim Multikultural, which serve as platforms for interreligious and intercultural dialogue. In these spaces, women act as “social architects,” designing interactional patterns based on empathy, shared experiences, and mutual understanding. This phenomenon echoes Buranajaroenkij’s (2020) study of women’s peace movements in Thailand and Myanmar, which found that women’s limited access to formal decision-making often stimulates the emergence of new, network-based leadership forms. Such leadership is horizontal, collaborative, and relational what she terms grassroots peace leadership proving highly effective in creating resilient local peace networks. In Singkawang’s plural society, women’s social networks function as informal mechanisms for managing symbolic conflict and reinforcing intergroup trust. These networks provide safe spaces for dialogue, mediate religious differences, and nurture intercultural

respect. Rather than merely fostering social cohesion, they strengthen the community's collective capacity to interact without domination or subordination.

Social Innovation as Contextual Peace Education

One of the most profound forms of socio-cultural innovation led by women in Singkawang is the transformation of peace values into informal educational practices. Through communal work, entrepreneurship training, and interethnic religious gatherings, women transmit values of empathy, cooperation, and mutual care across ethnic and religious lines. These practices function as social pedagogies that cultivate collective awareness of peaceful coexistence amid diversity. This aligns with Tetep & Dahlena's (2024) peace-building approach to social skills development, which emphasizes experiential learning through interpersonal engagement rather than didactic instruction. In this context, women's community activities serve as social laboratories where members learn to manage differences through direct, embodied action rather than through moral or theoretical discourse. Muzammil & Mariyadi (2025) further argue that effective multicultural education must be rooted in the lived experiences of local communities. Women in Singkawang intuitively apply this principle by integrating cultural, religious, and ethical values into shared activities creating a form of contextualized peace education that builds empathy and solidarity through collective practice.

Transforming Local Values into Peace Capital

Women's socio-cultural innovations in Singkawang are deeply intertwined with the local values of West Kalimantan, which emphasize mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), and communal harmony. By reinterpreting these traditional values, women transform local wisdom into a form of social capital for peace. They reframe tradition not as an exclusive marker of ethnic identity but as an inclusive space for intercultural encounter.

For instance, Cap Go Meh, once a distinctly Chinese religious celebration, has evolved into a public festival uniting Malay, Dayak, and other ethnic groups in Singkawang. Behind this transformation are women who act as event coordinators, cultural narrators, and social mediators. Their leadership reflects a deliberate effort to reinterpret tradition as a shared moral narrative of unity and national identity. In Krause et al. (2018) framework, such practices represent inclusive peacebuilding, which merges local cultural structures with principles of equality and participation. This bottom-up approach underscores that sustainable peace emerges not from state-centered policy but from community driven engagement. Thus, women's innovations in Singkawang exemplify a community-based peace model in which grassroots actors, rather than institutions, become the principal agents of transformation.

Social Creativity amid Structural Constraints

Despite their crucial contributions to social harmony, women in Singkawang continue to navigate structural barriers such as patriarchal norms, cultural biases, and restricted access to formal resources. Yet, these constraints have spurred innovative strategies for empowerment. Rather than confronting structural power directly, women engage in transformative adaptation Ellerby (2013) a process of negotiating power through incremental and peaceful change. Through initiatives such as expanding women's participation in religious events, organizing interethnic economic training programs, and building family-based solidarity networks, women subtly reconfigure social hierarchies from within. These adaptive practices demonstrate agency, resilience, and moral creativity qualities that allow women to challenge inequality without antagonism, transforming constraint into opportunity.

Implications for Education and Social Policy

The socio-cultural innovations driven by women in Singkawang carry significant implications for both education and social policy. First, they highlight that peace education can effectively develop through community-based learning models, where society itself functions as both the actor and the learning space. Such an approach produces educational environments that are fluid, experiential, and contextually grounded. Second, women's grassroots initiatives demonstrate the importance of integrating local wisdom with global principles of inclusion and justice key components of education for harmony. For national education policy, these findings suggest the need to formally recognize women as knowledge producers in multicultural education. The values they cultivate within social spaces should be incorporated into school curricula and extracurricular programs, allowing students to experience social harmony as a lived practice rather than a theoretical lesson. Ultimately, women's socio-cultural creativity in Singkawang offers a compelling model for building inclusive peace from the ground up. It affirms that harmony is not the absence of difference, but the ongoing capacity to engage diversity with empathy, equality, and shared humanity.

Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE) Model

The synthesis of national and international literature in this study produced a conceptual framework termed Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE). This model integrates two major theoretical approaches Feminist Peace Theory and Multicultural Education Theory to explain how education and women's social roles interact in fostering harmony within multiethnic societies. Conceptually, GMPE departs from the assumption that education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission but a form of social transformation involving values, power relations, and identity construction. Feminist Peace Theory posits that women possess social and moral capacities to nurture empathy and solidarity across groups due to their proximity to community life and care-based social practices (Ellerby, 2013; Heathcote, 2018). Meanwhile, Multicultural Education Theory Banks (2015), emphasizes equality, representation, and curriculum reconstruction as key to creating inclusive and just education. By integrating these two perspectives, GMPE situates women as transformative agents who strengthen cultures of peace and inclusive educational practices. The model consists of three interrelated dimensions:

Empowerment of Women in Educational and Social Leadership

The first dimension focuses on enhancing women's capacity and participation in decision-making across various sectors, including education, social, and cultural spheres. According to Buranajaroenkij (2020), women in Southeast Asia often face structural barriers that restrict their access to formal peace and policy spaces. To address this, empowerment must function on two levels. The first level involves the empowerment of voice, which strengthens women's ability to articulate ideas and advocate for peace values in public forums. The second level is the empowerment of structure, which seeks to expand women's access to educational institutions, social organizations, and policymaking bodies, thereby providing them with the necessary platforms to influence decisions and policies.

In Singkawang, this empowerment is evident through women's leadership in multiple spheres from the mayor's office and local parliament to the election commission and interethnic civic organizations. Such examples demonstrate that women are not merely implementers of social programs but active shapers of policy directions that sustain social harmony.

Empathic Interethnic Learning

The second dimension focuses on the pedagogical and social learning aspects that cultivate empathy-based learning within formal and non-formal educational contexts. Empathic learning requires teachers and students to understand the lived experiences of others with different ethnic, religious, or gender backgrounds. Tetep & Dahlena (2024) argue that peace education is effective when learners are trained to interpret differences as opportunities for social learning rather than as sources of conflict. In this process, teachers particularly female educators serve as facilitators who instill empathy through reflective and dialogic pedagogy. Initiatives such as interschool cultural exchanges, multiethnic social projects, and interfaith youth discussions represent practical forms of empathic learning applicable to Singkawang. This approach resonates with Krause et al.'s (2018) concept of inclusive peacebuilding, which stresses the involvement of all social groups, especially those historically marginalized, in peace processes. Thus, empathic interethnic learning functions not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a medium for social reconstruction toward a more just and peaceful coexistence.

Integration of Gender Equality into Curriculum and School Culture

The third dimension underscores the need to transform educational systems so that gender equality becomes an integral component of curricula, teaching practices, and institutional culture. Gender integration cannot be achieved merely by adding new content but through a paradigmatic shift in how education views difference as a source of strength rather than division. Ellerby (2013) and Heathcote (2018) argue that gender-responsive education must identify and address structural inequalities within schools, including gendered role biases, unequal representation, and limited participation spaces for female students. Hence, multicultural education policy must be supported by teacher training and local policy formulation that promote gender justice. In Singkawang, the implementation of culturally rooted curricula that recognize ethnic diversity has progressed, yet the gender dimension remains underdeveloped. Through the GMPE framework, educational institutions are encouraged to develop transformative curricula that integrate multicultural values, social empathy, and gender equality into everyday teaching and learning practices.

Interconnection among Dimensions

The three dimensions of the GMPE model interact dynamically to form a continuous cycle of social learning. Women's empowerment enhances inclusive leadership, which, in turn, fosters empathic learning environments. These learning processes then generate school cultures that uphold gender equality and celebrate diversity. Conversely, just and inclusive educational environments further strengthen women's positions as peacebuilders and social innovators. This reciprocal relationship creates a self-sustaining system in which education and social practice reinforce one another, advancing both gender equity and multicultural harmony.

Relevance of the Model for Singkawang and Indonesian Education

The GMPE model holds particular relevance for multiethnic cities such as Singkawang, where local wisdom and global peace principles intersect. By promoting empathy-based and gender-equitable education, communities can build social resilience against identity-based polarization and potential conflict. At the national level, GMPE provides a conceptual foundation for developing gender-responsive character education, civic education, and multicultural education policies. It bridges local socio-cultural contexts with global discourses on inclusive transformation, emphasizing that peace and equality must be learned, practiced, and institutionalized simultaneously.

Ultimately, the GMPE framework affirms that women's empowerment and multicultural education are mutually reinforcing forces both essential to the realization of education for harmony and the cultivation of a peaceful, equitable Indonesian society.

Table 1. Conceptual Framework of Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE)

Dimension	Core Focus	Key Activities / Indicators	Expected Outcomes	Representative Theories / Scholars
1. Empowerment of Women in Educational and Social Leadership	Enhancing women's participation in educational decision-making, community leadership, and policy formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership training for female teachers and civic leaders Inclusion of women in local education boards Policy advocacy for gender mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased representation of women in school and civic institutions Greater influence of women in multicultural policy agendas 	Feminist Peace Theory (Ellerby, 2013; Buranajaroenkij, 2020)
2. Empathic Interethnic Learning	Fostering empathy and intergroup understanding in educational contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-cultural classroom projects Interfaith and interethnic student collaborations Dialogic and reflective pedagogy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved intergroup trust and cooperation Reduction of symbolic and social prejudice 	Peace Education Theory (Heathcote, 2018; Krause et al., 2018)
3. Integration of Gender Equality into Curriculum and School Culture	Embedding gender equity within multicultural educational systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum revision for gender representation Teacher training in gender sensitivity Inclusive school policies and mentoring programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutionalization of gender-just and inclusive education culture 	Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, 2015; Noddings, 2012)

Source: Author's own elaboration (2025) based on synthesis of Feminist Peace Theory and Multicultural Education frameworks

5. Comparison

Compared with previous studies on multicultural education and women's peace roles Ellerby (2013), Krause et al. (2018), Buranajaroenkij (2020), and Muzammil & Mariyadi (2025), this research provides an integrative synthesis rather than a single-case analysis. While earlier works examined either gender participation or multicultural pedagogy separately, the present study connects both domains through the Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE) framework. This conceptual model advances the state of the art by demonstrating how women's empowerment, empathic interethnic learning, and gender equality within school culture operate as interlinked dimensions of sustainable social harmony. Thus, the study contributes a holistic and context-based perspective that bridges feminist peace theory with multicultural education practice, particularly relevant for multiethnic societies such as

Singkawang. Therefore, the GMPE framework not only extends previous feminist and multicultural perspectives but also provides a locally grounded model applicable to other plural societies.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the role of women in sustaining social harmony within multiethnic communities, such as Singkawang, should not be seen merely as a social activity but as a complex process of education and cultural transformation. Through a critical review of both national and international literature, the research confirms that women function as cultural mediators, peace educators, and social innovators, contributing significantly to social stability and the formation of a shared interethnic identity. Women in Singkawang articulate peace through value-based and empathetic social practices. Rather than engaging in formal negotiations or political power structures, they build peace through community activities, family education, and interfaith cooperation. This aligns with Heathcote's (2018) concept of "everyday peacebuilding," which involves the accumulation of small, repetitive acts that gradually nurture trust and social solidarity.

Multicultural education in Singkawang has evolved as a medium for promoting values of coexistence, though the gender dimension remains underdeveloped. Educational programs often emphasize ethnic and religious diversity but fail to fully integrate gender equality into curricula, pedagogy, or school culture. As Banks (2015) and Krause et al. (2018) argue, true multicultural education requires structural transformation that promotes justice and equitable power relations, rather than simply celebrating cultural diversity. Women's socio-cultural innovations in Singkawang, such as cultural festivals, interfaith forums, and community initiatives, represent a form of contextualized peace education rooted in local wisdom. Through these efforts, women have transformed traditional values into social capital for harmony, reinforcing the view that sustainable peace arises not from external intervention but from social creativity cultivated within the community.

The synthesis of the literature led to the conceptual model of Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE), which integrates Feminist Peace Theory and Multicultural Education Theory. The model positions women as strategic actors in educational and social development through three interrelated dimensions: women's empowerment in educational and social leadership, empathic interethnic learning, and the integration of gender equality into curricula and institutional culture. Together, these dimensions form a cyclical process of social learning that reinforces inclusive leadership, intergroup empathy, and gender justice. In conclusion, gender-oriented peace education in multiethnic societies such as Singkawang serves both as a medium for teaching interidentity values and as an instrument of social transformation toward a just, inclusive, and sustainable community. Women are not auxiliary participants in this process; rather, they are active social architects who shape the cultural and educational directions of their communities.

7. Implications

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer several theoretical contributions to the development of multicultural education and gender-based peace studies. First, the GMPE model extends Multicultural Education Theory (Banks, 2015) by embedding gender justice as an essential not supplementary dimension. Within this framework, multicultural education becomes a space of identity and power negotiation rather than a mere celebration of difference. Second, the study enriches Feminist Peace Theory by providing empirical insight that women in non-conflict or "everyday peace" contexts also play decisive roles in sustaining social cohesion. Thus, feminist perspectives on peace are not limited to post-conflict reconstruction but remain relevant for multicultural settings characterized by latent symbolic tensions, such as Singkawang. Third, the research advances the concept of contextualized peace education, offering a model that is locally grounded yet globally aligned with the principles of equality and justice. This integrated perspective can serve as a conceptual bridge across disciplines linking education, sociology, and gender studies.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the results of this study yield three strategic implications. First, in Educational Policy, the Ministry of Education and Culture, in collaboration with regional education offices, can adopt the GMPE framework as a foundation for developing gender-sensitive multicultural education policies. The curriculum should prioritize empathy-

driven, cross-identity learning and actively involve women in institutional decision-making processes. Multiethnic schools in Singkawang can serve as social laboratories for implementing this model by incorporating local cultural practices into daily learning activities.

Second, regarding Social and Community Institutions, women's organizations, interfaith bodies, and civic forums should further strengthen women's roles as community educators who promote tolerance through social participation. Leadership training and cross-ethnic networking can enhance women's capacity as cultural mediators, enabling them to effectively bridge divides. Additionally, their experiences in peacebuilding and community engagement should be systematically documented and transformed into educational resources for both formal and informal learning contexts.

Lastly, in Research and Academic Development, future studies should employ empirical approaches to examine the applicability of the GMPE model in other plural regions of Indonesia, particularly in eastern cities and border areas. Participatory and interdisciplinary methods can assess the model's effectiveness in improving interethnic and gender relations. Moreover, quantitative research may be conducted to measure the impact of empathy-based learning on tolerance and inclusivity indicators within schools, providing data on the model's practical outcomes.

Socio-Cultural and Policy Implications

At the socio-cultural level, this study underscores that sustainable harmony in multiethnic societies depends on women's ability to dynamically reinterpret local values. State support for women's social roles should move beyond formal programming toward epistemic recognition acknowledging women as knowledge producers in the fields of education and peacebuilding. Gender-responsive educational and social policies must also reflect local cultural dimensions. Through such approaches, peacebuilding becomes bottom-up, grounded in lived social practice rather than bureaucratic intervention. The women of Singkawang exemplify how local values *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and solidarity can serve as intellectual and moral foundations for constructing a more humanistic, inclusive, and context-sensitive educational system.

Closing Remarks

The findings of this study affirm that multicultural harmony in Singkawang is not the result of conflict avoidance but of deliberate social processes sustained by women through education, empathy, and cultural innovation. The Gendered Multicultural Peace Education (GMPE) model provides both a conceptual and practical framework for understanding how equality, peace, and diversity can be interwoven within a dynamic social system. Ultimately, the future of education in plural societies such as Indonesia depends on its capacity to integrate two foundational principles: the recognition of diversity and the realization of gender equality. Through the synergy of women, education, and culture, the vision of education for harmony can move beyond normative ideals to become a lived and sustainable social reality.

Reference

- Anderson, L. R., & Collins, P. H. (2020). *Race, class, and gender: Intersections and inequalities* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Buranajoenkij, D. (2020). Women's roles in local peacebuilding in Thailand and Myanmar: Negotiating patriarchy through community networks. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 8(2), 213–234.
- Burns, R. J., & Aspeslagh, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Three decades of peace education around the world: An anthology*. Information Age Publishing.
- Buwono, T. H., Jumiati, N., & Salim, M. (2024). Multikulturalisme dan rekonsiliasi sosial di Singkawang: Studi hubungan etnis Melayu, Dayak, dan Tionghoa. *Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius*, 23(1), 55–74.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Ellerby, K. (2013). (En)gendered security: Women's advocacy and conflict prevention. *Global Society*, 27(2), 157–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2013.805130>
- Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (50th anniversary ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press.
- Harris, I. M., & Morrison, M. L. (2013). *Peace education* (3rd ed.). McFarland.

- Heathcote, G. (2018). Everyday peacebuilding and the feminist politics of care. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20(4), 475–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2018.1494140>
- Krause, J., Krause, W., & Bränfors, P. (2018). Women’s participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace. *International Interactions*, 44(6), 985–1016. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>
- Muzammil, & Mariyadi. (2025). Penguatan pendidikan multikultural di sekolah berbasis masyarakat plural: Studi kasus Singkawang. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 15(1), 33–50.
- Noddings, N. (2012). *The ethics of care: A feminist approach to moral education*. University of California Press.
- Reardon, B. A. (1996). *Sexism and the war system*. Syracuse University Press.
- Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the oppressed*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., & Friedman, T. (2018). *ICCS 2016: International Civic and Citizenship Education Study*. IEA. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39357-5>
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Tetep, & Dahlena, A. (2024). Pendidikan perdamaian berbasis keterampilan sosial dalam masyarakat multietnis Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Humaniora*, 12(2), 112–128.
- UN Women. (2023). *Progress of the world’s women 2023: Families in a changing world*. UN Publications.
- UNESCO. (2022). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing.