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The Impact of Remittances from Indonesian Workers on Social Welfare, Gender Equality, and Women's Political Participation in Indonesia

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Abstract

The remittance should not only contribute to the family income but also influence the social-political behavior in Indonesia. This study examines the impact of Indonesian workers' remittances on Indonesia's welfare, gender equality, and political participation. By quantitative analysis, this study examines how remittances affect social welfare, promote gender equality and woman's political participation. The results show that remittance is only significant to social welfare, not gender equality and political participation. This study argues that the limited impact of remittance is only on social welfare because the perception of the remittance is limited to economic and social life, while also limited political education and gender equality awareness. This study also explores the effect of remittances on gender roles, family and community relations, and women's political involvement. According to preliminary investigations, remittances contribute to higher well-being through raising family income, expanding access to education and health facilities, and empowering women economically. Policymakers can establish policies to increase the positive impact of remittances on social welfare, gender equality, and women's political engagement in Indonesia by analyzing the impact of remittances.

Keywords: Remittances; Indonesian Workers; Social Welfare; Gender Equality, Women's Political Participation.

Introduction

Indonesian migrant workers contribute significantly to Indonesian development. As a developing country with a large number of migrant workers, Indonesia receives significant support from remittances to finance its development (Robison & Hadiz, 2017, (Spitzer et al., 2023)). The migrant workers, particularly the female migrant workers, contribute to promoting socioeconomic development (Aufiya, 2023). Moreover, remittance also affects political participation, social welfare, gender equality, and women's financial security (Machasio & Tillmann, 2023). . In other words, remittance contributes to Indonesia's social, economic and political change. However, how significant does the remittance affect gender equality and women's political participation in Indonesia? This study provides an empirical analysis by

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examining the impact of remittance on social welfare, gender equality, and women's political participation in Indonesia..

Indonesia has a large number of migrant workers. According to a study by Parahyangan Catholic University, 277,489 Indonesian migrant workers working in several countries in 2019 (SUMBER BP2MI?). However, the COVID-19 pandemic decreased the number of Indonesian migrant workers to 111,436 in 2020. In 2022, the number of Indonesian migrant workers increased. From January to September 2022, the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BP2MI) reported that 122,870 migrant workers started to work abroad (SUMBER BP2MI?). Among Indonesian migrant workers population, the number of female workers is dominant. According to BP2MI reports, in 2019 female workers was 69.25% (192,173) of total migrant workers, while in 2020, 79.74% (90,454) of Indonesian migrant workers are female (Dewi, 2023). In 2021, 87,92% (63,853) of Indonesian migrant workers are female, and until September 2022, the number of female workers was 74,549 or 60.67% of total migrant workers. This situation shows that the majority of Indonesian migrant workers is female. Therefore, regarding to the remittance, it could be assume that female migrant workers mostly contribute to the remittance in Indonesia.

This study aims to look into the various impacts of Indonesian workers remittances on the community development, especially for woman. Beside examines the impact of remittance to social welfare (Human Development Index, Gini index, poverty gap, income gap, and life expectancy), this study also examine the impact to gender equality (female unemployment, femane employment, inequality index) and woman's political participation (percentage of women in parliament and political party). . To fully inform readers of how remittances affect well-being indicators like poverty reduction, education, and health, this study employs mixed methods to combine quantitative and qualitative data. This study also examines how remittances from Indonesian migrant workers aid government initiatives, women's economic empowerment, and resource access.

By examining the impact of remittances from Indonesian workers on social welfare, gender equality, and women's political participation, this study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on migration, development, and gender studies. The findings will impact Indonesia's policymakers, development practitioners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Finally, this study aims to contribute to sustainable, inclusive development through the power of remittances in Indonesia.

Literature review

Remittances are significant for a developing country like Indonesia. To better understand remittances, this literature review presents several contributions of remittances on ownership,

financial development, migration, and economic stability. Some of these studies provide important insights for researchers and decision-makers in playing their roles and implications in the global context (Kadir, 2023; Spitzer et al., 2023). The remittance is related to sending money from abroad to one country or vice versa; this has a vital role in developing countries (Qamruzzaman, 2023). Remittance can play a role in reducing the poverty rate within one country. In Sub-Saharan Africa, remittance plays a significant role in reducing poverty. Furthermore, remittances can also be a source of state income for financing national development. remittance is also be considered in the context of health, where it impacts to both economic stability and improve family health (Asher, 2017; Song et al., 2019). However, remittance may also bring a negative effect on the pattern and number of remittances sent.

Remittance is also contributing for developing countries to fight against poverty (Aguilar-Pinto et al., 2023). Remittance can be a sizable source of income for immigrant families, enabling them to meet fundamental needs like housing, healthcare, and education. Along with aiding in financing small and medium-sized businesses, remittances can impact a socially by changing the way of life in the community in their origin country. For instance, sending remittance can promote social mobility, a high standard of living, and access to healthcare and education. Remittance can also affect gender equality because it increase women's economic influence in the family and therefore strengthening their bargaining power for family's decision. Remittance amounts, government policies, and the state of the global economy are a few of the variables that can affect how much of an impact of the remittance. Moreover, remittance can also trigger challenges, such as dependence on one source of income and economic problems, when the flow of funds from remittances stops suddenly (Dicker et al., 2018; McNaughton & Lockie, 2017).

Literatures explain that remittance is essential in reducing poverty, encouraging economic development, and having significant social and economic impacts. To increase the positive impact of remittances, the government and various related stakeholders need to design policies and encourage productivity and sustainability in the use of remittance, as well as involve remittances in a broader context in development, including increasing access to education, health, and gender equality. In other words the literatures provides a holistic view of remittances and their impact on poverty, financial development, migration, and economic stability in a broader context. However, few of them discuss the impact to the gender equality and women's political participation. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative method to measure the causal relationship between the remittance as independent variable and social welfare, gender equality and women's political participation as the dependent variables. The independent variable in this study is the amount of annual remittances from Indonesian migrant workers abroad. While the dependent variable in this study

is divided into three groups, namely social welfare (Human Development Index, Gini Index, Poverty Gap, Income Gap, and Life Expectancy), gender quality (Female Unemployment, Female Employment, and Gender Inequality), and women’s political participation (Democracy Index, Percentage of Women in Parliament, and Percentage of Women in Political Parties).

This study also uses control variables, namely Population Density and GDP. Data on remittances was obtained from The Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), while social, democracy, and population density data were obtained from the Economist Intelligence Unit. Data on the percentage of women in parliament and political parties were obtained from the Indonesian Statistics-BPS (*Badan Pusat Statistik*). While the data on Population Density and GDP are retrieved from World Bank.. This study uses time series regression analysis by the RStudio program. Time series analysis with a static specification model is used for all regressions analysis except for analyzing the democracy index which using an ordinal regression model.

Table 1. Variables and Indicators

Independent Variable		
Remittance	Total remittances from migrant workers per year (Thousands of USD)	Source: KNOMAD
Dependent Variable		
Social Welfare		Source: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)
Human Development Index	Human development index covering health, education, and economy (0-1)	
Gini Index	Gap level of relative income distribution among residents in a region (1-100)	
Income Gap	Level of income gap between one group and another (thousands of USD)	
Poverty Gap	The ratio of the average income of people below the poverty line (thousands of USD)	
Life Expectancy	Estimated number of years of life of individuals living in an area (1-100)	
Gender Equality	Number of women unemployed (thousands)	
Female Unemployment	Number of working women (thousands)	
Female Employment	Level of inequality between men and women in access to work and the economy (0-1)	
Inequality		
Political Participation	Democratic state measuring index (0-100)	
Democracy Index	Percentage of women members of parliament (1-100)	
% Women in Parliament		

Percentage of women in political parties (1-100)	
% Women in Political Parties	
Control Variable	
Demographic Density	Population density in an area (millions)
GDP	The total added value of goods and services produced by various production units in a country within a certain period (millions of USD)

Source: World Bank

Results and Discussion

Social Welfare

The regression results show that the remittance partially impact to the social welfare. Table 2 shows that remittance only positively and statistically significant impact to the Humand Development Index and Life Expectancy. The results also show that remittance positively impact to Gini Index, income gap, and poverty gap but not statistically significant. Moreover, the remittance impact to life expectancy is higher than the impact to HDI.

Table 2. Human Development Index, Gini Index, Poverty Gap, Income Gap, and Life Expectancy

Variables	Dependent Variable				
	HD (1)	Gini Index (2)	Income Gap (3)	Poverty Gap (4)	Life Expectancy (5)
Remittance	0.002*** (0.001)	0.111 (0.287)	0.048 (0.078)	0.385 (0.384)	0.472*** (0.101)
Population Density	0.002*** (0.001)	-0.204 (0.187)	-0.067** (0.026)	-0.272** (0.126)	-0.109 (0.072)
GDP	0.002 (0.001)	1.118** (0.417)	0.095 (0.074)	-0.313 (0.359)	0.044 (0.147)
Constant	0.379*** (0.071)	55.044** (21.432)	7.898** (2.852)	45.304*** (13.653)	79.321*** (8.567)
Observation	32	27	27	27	32

Note: Dependent Variable: Human Development Index, Gini Index, Poverty Gap, Income Gap, and Life Expectancy. Independent Variable: Remittance. Control Variables: Population density and GDP. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The results corroborate earlier research that demonstrated how remittances could raise human development indicators. Remittance funds can be used to cover the cost of necessities like healthcare, education, and other conditions, increasing the standard of living and improving the general state of the populace. Remittances are a crucial component of raising life expectancy and

enhancing human development in Indonesia, according to the statistical significance of the association and the favorable results.

According to statistical results, remittances have a positive effect on Indonesia's Gini index, income gap, and poverty gap. Keep in mind that there is no statistically significant correlation between these relationships. This result suggests that even if there was a correlation between remittances and various indicators of income inequality and poverty, it might not be strong enough to have a statistically significant impact. The lack of statistical significance could be attributed to many factors. Other contextual factors or economic dynamics may overshadow remittances' impact on Indonesia's income inequality and poverty gap. Furthermore, it might imply that to address these complex problems, broader systemic factors must be considered since remittance alone are insufficient. Additional research is needed to fully comprehend the relationship between remittances, income inequality, and the poverty gap (Kordas, 2018). The governmental policies, employment opportunities, and social welfare programs may provide more explanations (Manow et al., 2018; Teja, 2015).

A survey on the role of remittance to the family's socio economic in three region of East Java province (Pare Kediri, Blitar, and Malang) shows that remittance contributes to the better family's economic conditions. Migrant worker's family uses remittances to expand their businesses and build houses. In the Pare Kediri, many shops are owned by migrant families. Therefore, the economic impact is not only on migrant families but also on the surrounding community. Moreover, the remittance also impact to education access where the child of migrant workers can access higher education level.

Gender Equality

Remittance can promote gender equality in multiple ways (Qamruzzaman, 2023; Rahman & Salisu, 2023). They empower women economically by providing them with financial resources and opportunities to participate in income-generating activities. Economic empowerment has the power to challenge gender norms and alter the distribution of power within families. Moreover, women become more financially independent, and remittances might improve their capacity for decision-making. Therefore, remittance may improve women more control over their life and resources.

Table 3. Female Unemployment, Female Employment, Gender Inequality

Variables	Dependent Variable		
	Female unemployment (1)	Female Employment (2)	Inequality (3)
Remittance	0.443	0.003	0.001

	(0.409)	(0.044)	(0.002)
Population Density	-0.119 (0.322)	0.024* (0.013)	-0.004*** (0.001)
GDP2	-1.310** (0.322)	0.008 (0.040)	0.001 (0.002)
Constant	42.530 (39.564)	-1.733 (1.366)	1.050*** (0.140)
Observation	31	31	32

Note: Dependent Variable: Human Development Index, Gini Index, Poverty Gap, Income Gap, and Life Expectancy. Independent Variable: Remittance. Control Variables: Population density and GDP. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

However, Table 3 shows that remittance had no appreciable impact on the three dependent variables of gender inequality, female employment, and unemployment among women. According to these findings, remittance and these variables may not be correlated to those variables. Remittance s might not significantly impact female unemployment in the study's context, as evidenced by the need to reduce female unemployment. Other factors, such as regional labor market conditions, skill mismatches, or structural impediments, may be more significant in determining women's employment outcomes.

Meanwhile, remittance does not significantly affect women's employment. This result suggests that the financial support from Indonesian workers may take longer to increase employment opportunities for women. It is crucial to consider other factors impacting women's labor market participation, such as education, training, societal norms, and discriminatory practices (Caligiuri et al., 2011; Komarudin et al., 2019). Furthermore, the results shows that remittance does not significantly impact gender inequality. It is possible that remittance indirectly address gender disparities and inequality, even though they might have a positive impact on other development-related factors like poverty reduction or education. It is critical to realize that gender disparity is a complex problem influenced by various factors, including societal norms, cultural practices, and institutional frameworks.

Even though remittances may not significantly impact the specific variables of female unemployment, female employment, and gender inequality, it is essential to understand the potential indirect effects and spillover advantages they can have on gender dynamics (Clayton, 2021; Kaufmann, 2011). By granting women greater access to resources, healthcare, and education, for instance, remittance inflows may improve households' financial situations without directly affecting outcomes related to gender. Many former female migrant workers have been able to improve their socioeconomic status because they have experience, knowledge, and skills. This condition makes women have a bargaining position in the family. By mastering economic

resources resulting from working abroad, migrant workers become the hope of their families to be able to solve family financial problems. Therefore, in making family decisions, women migrant workers are more dominant because of their significant contribution to meeting family needs. Even so, in several cases, there were migrant women who felt disappointed with their husbands because the money they sent to their families was instead used for useless purposes and even for remarriage.

Women's Political Participation

The study suggests that remittances may affect women's political participation in Indonesia (Hasanah & Musyafak, 2018). Economic empowerment through remittances can increase women's political engagement by allowing them to participate in political activities and decision-making processes (Clayton, 2021; Rasyidin & Aruni, 2016). However, further research is needed to explore how remittances influence women's political participation and leadership opportunities.

Table 4. Democracy Index, Percentage of Women in Parliament, Percentage of Women in Political Party

Variables	Dependent Variable		
	Democracy Index (ordered logistic) (1)	Women Parliament OLS (2)	Women Party OLS (3)
Remittance	0.350 (0.319)	-0.050 (0.488)	0.002 (1.195)
Population Density	0.423*** (0.011)	0.191 (0.212)	1.726** (0.515)
GDP2	-0.016*** (0.003)	1.976** (0.789)	1.051 (1.827)
Constant		10.744 (22.052)	-159.626** (53.507)
Observation	32	12	12

Note: Dependent Variable: Human Development Index, Gini Index, Poverty Gap, Income Gap, and Life Expectancy. Independent Variable: Remittance. Control Variables: Population density and GDP. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The result on Table 4 shows that remittance does not have a significant influence on all of the dependent variables examined. This result confirm the previous study on the women's political participation (Gusmansyah, 2019; Salviana Darvina Soedarwo et al., 2020). The findings imply that there may not be a correlation between some political indices and remittances.

Furthermore, the results also show that no correlations between remittance and the percentage of women in parliament. It implies that even though remittances may support other aspects of development, such as the social or economic ones, they might only give limited effect in increasing engagement and involvement of women in political decision-making processes. It is essential to keep in mind that many factors, such as societal norms (Oktaviani,J, 2018), cultural practices (Pribadi, 2018), electoral processes (Bensel & Sanders, 2011), and political party structures (Eder et al., 2017), affect political representation and gender equality in politics. The importance of these environmental factors in influencing political dynamics may account for the absence of a significant correlation between remittance and these variables.

Remittance inflows may contribute to household financial security (Spitzer et al., 2023), empower women (Davies & Idrus, 2018; Gibson, 2012), and provide them with access to resources and education (Dibley & Ford, 2020), all of which may have a favorable impact on political engagement and the participation of women in politics (Davies & Idrus, 2018; Prihatini, 2020), despite the statistical study's conclusion that remittances have no appreciable impact on these political variables.

The findings indicate that remittances do not seem to significantly impact the Democracy Index, the proportion of women in parliament, or the number of women in political parties. These findings emphasize the need to consider more comprehensive contextual factors and structural dynamics that impact political outcomes and the participation of women in politics. More research is needed to understand indirect effects, identify mechanisms for promoting political participation and gender equality, and analyze indirect effects to develop strategies using remittance inflows to improve inclusive and equitable political processes.

Implications for theory and practice

The findings of this study significantly impact remittances and development theories. By focusing on remittance in a broader social and political components, the study helps raise awareness beyond traditional economic factor. The study also strengthens the case for the various theoretical accounts of the complex relationship between remittances and development results.

The study is concerned with how remittances might improve gender equality, socioeconomic welfare, and women's political participation in Indonesia. Policymakers can use the study results to develop programs and policies that will maximize the contribution of remittances to resolving social problems. Remittances may make it simpler for families in receiving areas to access social

security (Iftikhar et al., 2019), healthcare (De Camargo, 2017), and education. Projects funded by remittances could also support efforts to empower women and promote their active participation in politics (Erzeel & Celis, 2016; Gibson, 2012; Krook, 2017). The findings highlight the significance of financial inclusion and the need for appropriate tools to improve investment and remittance management. Remittances can enhance social welfare and gender equality to the fullest extent possible if individuals and families make the most of them by increasing financial literacy and access to financial services.

Limitations

This study has several limitations, particularly related to the data and contextual analysis. The findings in this study highlight the importance of considering more in-depth structural components and social dynamics when examining the relationships between remittances and female employment, female unemployment, and gender inequality. It is critical to adopt a comprehensive strategy that considers both the economic component of remittance and the socio-cultural, educational, and institutional factors that affect gender inequality. It is essential to acknowledge any weaknesses in the analysis that might have played a role in the absence of an apparent influence. These limitations can include sample size, measurement issues, or omitting essential variables that could skew the correlation between remittance and the dependent variables. Future research might circumvent these limitations better to understand the relationship between remittance and gender-related outcomes.

Future research utilizing primary data collection techniques like surveys and interviews may further examine remittance recipients' experiences and viewpoints. Another issue is that the benefits of remittances are highlighted more than any potential drawbacks. Future research may look into the dangers and disadvantages of remittances, including their dependence and possible effects on local economies or labor market dynamics. Understanding remittances' advantages and disadvantages is crucial for developing comprehensive policies and interventions.

Potential for Future Research

More research is required in several areas to build on the current findings. More research is needed on the effectiveness of legislative initiatives intended to maximize the favorable effects of remittances on social welfare, gender equality, and women's political participation. Comparative research comparing regions or countries may highlight the most effective methods and significant discoveries.

Future research could also examine social networks and diaspora organizations' role in assisting recipients to maximize their remittances. Understanding how these networks contribute to social and political development can impact the design of interventions that use social capital and encourage community resilience. Future research should examine the impact of technological

advancement on social welfare, gender equality, and women's political participation. These trends include developments in fintech and digital remittances, for instance. This situation is brought on by shifting migratory movements and the fluidity of remittance transfers. As a result, comprehensive data on the evolving remittance landscape and its potential impact on development would be made available.

Studies on the intersections between gender and other social identities, such as class, ethnicity, and geography may give insights about how remittances produce power dynamics and disparities within homes and communities. Investigating how remittances affect various groups may lead to a more in-depth understanding of the social and political effects in Indonesia. This study broadens the area of research into the intricate relationships between remittances and socioeconomic welfare, gender equality, and women's political participation in Indonesia.

Conclusions

This study examines how remittance from Indonesian workers impacted women's political participation, gender equality, and socioeconomic welfare. The results highlight the complex dynamics in various domains and provide insightful information on the varied effects of remittances. According to the results, remittances significantly improve social welfare metrics like poverty reduction, access to education, and healthcare outcomes. It also enables Indonesian households to improve their standard of living and grow their economies. These findings highlight the importance of remittances as a source of income and their contribution to social welfare.

Remittance also demonstrate the potential to advance gender equality by granting women greater economic autonomy and decision-making power. The financial resources made possible by remittance inflows upend long-standing gender norms in families and communities and give women opportunities to engage in the economy. However, some gender-related indices, like female unemployment, female employment, and gender inequality, did not seem to be significantly impacted by remittances. This situation shows that the remittance may impact to gender equality in indirect way. The traditional norms and culture may hinder the impact of remittance to the gender equality. Therefore, culture research by including other factors and in a broader context is critical.

This study also shows that remittances have little to no impact on political metrics like the Democracy Index, the proportion of women in parliament, or the ratio of women in political parties. The complexity of Indonesian political system may hinder the effect of remittance to the women's political participation in regarding their contribution through remittance. The lack of political education to the female migrant workers may also be a factor. Therefore, the role of

political party in educating people, including the female migrant workers is no more than essential.

Moreover, this study suggest the government to create a specific program targeting the female migrant workers to improve the benefits from remittance beyond socioeconomic factors. Remittance may contribute to deal with gender equality while improving women participation in politics. It can be a great foundation for gender equality since women could improve her bargaining power in the family decision making. When woman has financial support, they may confident to participate in politics by become the political party member. However, many factors are influence this situation. The lack understanding of the stakeholders—politicians, government, civil society, NGO—on the benefits of remittance beyond socioeconomic also critical to be considered. Therefore, further exploration is needed to encourage the development of policies and interventions based on the transformative power of remittances that can promote sustainable development and an inclusive society in Indonesia.

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