

Women's Rights in Choosing a Partner in Marriage Gender Justice Perspective in Grobogan Regency

Abdul Aziz¹, Iqbal Subhan Nugraha², Lukman Hakim³

^{1,2}STAI Nurul Iman, Parung Bogor, Indonesia

³University of Tripoly, Lebanon

Correspondence: muheabdulaziz@gmail.com

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Abstract

The choice of a partner in marriage is a fundamental right of women that is often hampered by dominant social and cultural norms, especially in rural areas such as Grobogan Regency, Central Java. Despite increasing awareness of gender justice, women in the area still face various obstacles in expressing their right to choose a life partner. This study aims to explore how women's rights in choosing a partner in marriage are viewed from the perspective of gender justice and its impact on women's empowerment in Grobogan Regency. The method used is qualitative research with a legal social approach through case studies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five women; Rabbiah, Suliyem, Hartini, Kasmiyati, and Surati in Grobogan and participatory observations. The results show that despite the increased understanding of the right to choose a partner, many women are still affected by social and family pressures in making these decisions. Gender justice in the selection of spouses has been proven to have a positive impact on women's empowerment, both in social, economic, and psychological aspects, by increasing their autonomy and well-being. The implications of this study are the importance of education, advocacy, and local policies that better support women's rights to choose a partner, as well as women's social and economic empowerment at the local level. This research contributes to the understanding of the importance of gender justice in marriage practice, as well as the need for more proactive policy changes in supporting gender equality in society.

Keywords: *Women, Spouse Selection, Marriage, Gender Justice Perspective*

INTRODUCTION

Women's rights in choosing a spouse are fundamental rights that are closely related to individual freedom and human rights. In various societies, the choice of a partner for women is often governed by deep-rooted traditional norms, which in some cases actually limit women's autonomy in making important decisions in their lives (Syvertsen et al., 2023). Socio-cultural constructions and family laws that are historically gender-biased have affected

the extent to which women have rights and freedom in choosing a life partner, creating patterns of inequality that are detrimental to women in various contexts (Dubuson et al., 2023) The practice of choosing a spouse also varies greatly between countries and in various legal systems—both within the scope of religious and civil law—indicating differences in the interpretation and implementation of women's rights (Mardani et al., 2023) While some countries have taken steps to accommodate women's rights through more equitable family law reforms, others still retain traditional rules that can put women in a more vulnerable position (Bargain et al., 2022; Brodeur et al., 2021; Gaikwad, 2023). Therefore, the general narrative that tradition has always been detrimental to women needs to be reviewed in a more contextual way, so as not to ignore efforts to transform local values and reinterpret laws that actually expand the space of autonomy for women in choosing a life partner.

Data obtained from the Supreme Court during the 2018-2022 period shows that there were 213 cases of problematic marriages due to forced marriage, with 119 cases decided by divorce by religious courts (Wardah, 2023) Komnas Perempuan noted a significant increase, with cases of forced marriage increasing by up to 300 percent, in line with the high number of child marriages in Indonesia (Agustina & Ismah, 2024). However, the data does not reflect the complete picture, as many cases of forced marriage are not reported (Halim & Setyawan, 2023). This case is increasingly complicated to overcome due to the influence of several factors, including culture, often misinterpreted religious interpretations, and state regulations that provide opportunities for the legitimacy of forced marriage (Subeitani, 2022). Although Islam strictly prohibits the practice of forced marriage, as stated in the Qur'an and hadith, religious culture and interpretation often support this practice (Saputra et al., 2023). In this case, the KUPI religious deliberation emphasizes that the protection of women from forced marriage is an obligation (Musfiroh, 2024). KUPI's policy of emphasizing the prohibition of forced marriage is in line with the reality in Grobogan, where women still face social pressure in choosing a partner. KUPI's efforts to strengthen women's rights are very relevant to empower Grobogan women to have autonomy in marriage decisions. In addition, it is also necessary to make clear laws and regulations to provide protection and criminal sanctions to perpetrators of forced marriage. This is important to address this growing problem in Indonesia.

Forced marriage not only has a negative impact on women's personal lives, but also has a systemic social impact (Gaikwad, 2023). Forced marriage often threatens women's life safety, such as psychological trauma, depression, and negative social stigma (Uliutina et al., 2021). In addition, forced marriage can lead to divorce and family conflict, as well as add to social exclusion for victims (Mulaudzi et al., 2022). Some victims even experience despair, which can ultimately lead to suicide (Subeitan, 2022). In addition to the psychological impact, forced marriage also threatens women's reproductive health, because sexual violence can occur in forced marriages (Saputra et al., 2023). In the context of education, forced marriage often stops women's access to further education, reducing their opportunities for personal and professional development (Campmajó, 2020). The economic impact is no less great, because women who are forced to marry at a young age or without consent are often trapped in fragile economic situations (Gaikwad, 2023). This threatens the financial stability of families and limits opportunities for women to become economically independent. Therefore, concrete steps are needed to protect women from forced marriage through firmer policies and clear guarantees of legal protection (Jamal, 2022; Kunaepi et al., 2022; Sabbe, 2020).

This study identifies the main problems related to the limitations of women's rights in choosing a partner, especially in societies that apply faith-based family law or customary traditions (Halim & Setyawan, 2023). Data and empirical cases show that this inequality can affect the quality of marital relationships as well as women's freedom to make independent decisions in their personal lives (Syamanta et al., 2024). This phenomenon is a significant problem because it has the potential to weaken the position of women in the institution of marriage and hinder progress towards gender equality (Absatar & Alishayeva, 2023). In this context, there is an urgency to examine how family law can be adapted or reformed to provide greater space for women to choose their partners freely, without pressure from outsiders based on certain religious traditions or interpretations that are not in line with the principle of equality (Kumar, 2024).

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine women's rights in partner selection from the perspective of family law in Grobogan, Central Java, with a focus on how different legal systems can facilitate or, conversely, restrict these rights. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive analysis involving various perspectives, including legal,

socio-cultural, and gender contexts, in order to clarify and support the improvement of women's rights in mate selection. The findings of this study are also expected to be a reference for more equitable and gender-just family law policies and reforms, thereby supporting the achievement of a more equal and inclusive society.

Although various studies have examined women's rights in the context of mate selection, as the results of research by Benedicta Deogratias (Deogratias, 2020), Maria Barcons Campmajó (Campmajó, 2020), Asiva Noor Rachmayani (Asiva Noor Rachmayani, 2022), Olena Uliutina (Uliutina et al., 2021), Rabelani Mulaudzi (Mulaudzi et al., 2022), Alexia Sabbe (Sabbe, 2020), Arzam (Arzam et al., 2023), and (Agustina & Ismah, 2024). There are still significant gaps in the literature that focus on how different legal systems can grant or restrict women's access to these freedoms. Most previous studies have tended to focus on cultural or religious aspects without deepening the analysis of the legal complexities that affect women's position in determining a partner. The lack of comparative studies between legal systems also limits understanding of the variation in interpretation of women's rights in the selection of spouses, particularly in different family legal systems. For this reason, this study aims to fill the literature gap by investigating the relationship between family law, cultural values, and gender equality in the context of choosing a partner for women in Grobogan, Central Java.

This research contributes significantly by presenting a new perspective that emphasizes interdisciplinary analysis, integrating legal, socio-cultural, and gender perspectives in assessing women's rights in choosing a partner. The uniqueness of this research lies in its holistic approach that not only highlights the applicable rule of law, but also considers its practical implications for the welfare and position of women in society. By providing a deeper understanding of the ways in which the family legal system can be reformed to support gender equality, this research is expected to serve as a valuable reference for academics, policymakers, and legal practitioners who focus on developing more equitable and responsive family policies to women's needs.

DISCUSSION

Women's Rights in Mate Selection: A Gender Justice Perspective

Marriage is a social institution that is governed by various norms, both religious and cultural (Islamy, 2020). In Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim, marriage is not only regulated by state law, but also by religious values and customs (Darmawan et al., 2023). One of the important elements in marriage is the choice of a life partner. In many places, including Grobogan Regency, women's right to choose a partner in marriage is still hindered by patriarchal social norms. This understanding is based on the traditional view that puts women in a subordinate position, where big decisions such as choosing a partner are often in the hands of parents or family (Kumar, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand how gender justice theories can be applied in this context to ensure that women have equal rights in determining their life partners.

The gender justice perspective focuses on the application of the principle of equality in every aspect of life, including in marriage decisions (Direito, 2023). In this context, gender justice refers to women's right to freely choose a partner without external pressure that can limit their freedom (Syamanta et al., 2024). This principle is in line with the theory of justice from John Rawls, which emphasizes that all individuals should be treated with respect and given equal opportunities to achieve their happiness and well-being (M. G. F. Martin, 2023). In the application of gender justice in the selection of partners, women should be given the freedom to determine who will be their life partners, without any discrimination or restrictions based on gender (Con et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important to explore how this principle of justice can be translated into practice in a more conservative society such as Grobogan Regency.

Feminism theory provides a deeper framework for understanding gender inequality in society (Masood, 2023). Feminism, which fundamentally seeks to eliminate discrimination against women, offers a critical perspective on social structures that ignore women's voices, especially in the realm of marriage (R & Vimala, 2023). In the context of choosing a partner, feminism demands that women's rights be respected equally with men, so that women can freely choose a partner who suits their personal desires and values (Roifah, 2023). Feminism highlights how patriarchal culture, which often dominates social policies and practices in certain regions, influences decisions regarding women, including in the context of marriage

(Keyghobadi, 2023). Therefore, it is important to examine whether these patriarchal values still hinder women's right to choose a partner in Grobogan Regency.

Marriage is often seen as the union of two individuals based on mutual love and agreement (Li, 2024). However, in many traditional societies, especially in rural areas such as Grobogan, marriage is more often considered a family or community affair, rather than just the individuals involved. In many cases, the decision to get married is not the result of personal choice, but rather driven by social norms that require women to accept the decisions of their parents or families (Wang, 2024). This often causes women to lose control of their lives, which in turn affects their freedom to choose a life partner (Singh & Pandey, 2024). Therefore, it is important to identify the social and cultural barriers that lead to gender inequality in partner selection in Grobogan Regency.

In this study, the main focus is to uncover how women in Grobogan Regency interact with cultural and social norms in the process of choosing a marriage partner. People in this area tend to hold fast to traditional values, which often limit women's freedom to choose their life partners. Therefore, this study aims to explore whether the principles of gender justice can be applied in this context, as well as how women in Grobogan respond to various social and family pressures that influence their choices. Through this analysis, it is hoped that recommendations can be produced that can improve the understanding of women's rights in the context of marriage, especially in areas that are still heavily influenced by patriarchal values.

One of the main factors that hinder women's right to choose a partner in Grobogan is the existence of social norms that prioritize family authority. In patriarchal societies, women are often considered part of the "ownership" of the family who must follow the decisions of their parents, especially in the case of marriage (Darmawan et al., 2023). This view is based on a tradition that sees marriage as a collective responsibility of the family, not just an individual right (Siddiqui, 2023). Therefore, although in theory women have the right to choose a partner, in practice, the decision is more often influenced by the family, which makes it difficult for them to choose freely (Mbah, 2023). Thus, this study aims to reveal how much influence these social and cultural norms have on women's freedom in Grobogan.

Amartya Sen's theory of justice is also relevant in this context, where Sen emphasizes the importance of individual freedom to choose their own life path, including in the case of

marriage (Qizilbash, 2022). Sen argues that justice is not only achieved when individuals are treated equally, but also when they are given the opportunity to vote based on their personal desires and values (Feitosa, 2020). In this context, gender justice means giving women equal opportunities to make decisions about their life partners (Shiki & Silva, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to analyze how the application of these principles of justice can help women in Grobogan gain the right to choose their partners freely without discrimination or social barriers.

In addition, the role of religion in the Grobogan community cannot be underestimated. As part of a region where the majority of the population is Muslim, religious values are often used as the basis for many life decisions, including marriage (Sofiandi, 2024). In Islam, marriage is considered a social contract between two individuals, where both have equal rights and obligations (Mohammed et al., 2022). However, in practice, religious values are often combined with cultural norms that strengthen women's subordination (Nurliana, 2023). Therefore, it is important to examine how religious interpretation in Grobogan affects women's right to choose a partner, as well as the extent to which gender justice can be applied in this context. This research is expected to provide new insights into how religion and culture interact with each other in determining women's rights in choosing a partner in Grobogan.

Through this research, it is hoped that a better understanding of how gender justice can be applied in the context of marriage in Grobogan Regency can be created. This research also aims to contribute to a broader understanding of women's rights to choose a life partner, as well as the challenges they face in a society that is still heavily influenced by traditional and patriarchal norms (Rahmawati, 2020). Thus, the results of this study can provide a basis for more inclusive and progressive policies, which support the empowerment of women in society, especially in areas with conservative social characteristics such as Grobogan.

Thus, the study of women's rights in choosing a partner in marriage in Grobogan Regency needs to be seen through the perspective of gender justice and feminism. Gender justice theories, both from John Rawls and Amartya Sen, as well as feminist perspectives, provide a solid basis for analyzing this issue. This research focuses on the importance of women's freedom to choose a partner, despite the many cultural and social barriers that hinder this right. A deeper understanding of the local context in Grobogan will provide new

insights that can enrich academic and policy discourses that support gender justice in Indonesia.

Factors Hindering Women's Rights in Choosing a Partner

The choice of a life partner is one of the most significant decisions that every individual faces (Antehunegn et al., 2024). However, for women in Grobogan Regency, this decision is often not entirely in their hands. In a society that is still influenced by patriarchal social norms, women's right to choose a partner is often influenced by social, cultural, and family pressures (L. A. Martin, 2024). Based on the results of interviews with five women in Grobogan, it was found that although women legally have the right to choose a partner, in reality many factors limit their freedom. This shows the inequality in women's access to their rights, leading to the main question in this study: What are the barriers women face in choosing their life partners?

Rabiah, a 28-year-old married woman, explained that although she was given the freedom to choose a partner, her final decision was still heavily influenced by her parents' wishes. According to him, in Grobogan culture, parents' decisions about a girl's life partner are considered a family obligation. "I feel given a choice, but actually I can't oppose my parents' choice," said Rabiah (Rabiah, 2024). This illustrates the existence of structural barriers to women's freedom, even though they have the right to choose a partner.

An interview with Suliyem, a 35-year-old housewife, revealed that in her neighborhood, although women are valued in some aspects, there is still great pressure for women to choose a partner that is considered "suitable" by the family. Suliyem said that the culture of mutual cooperation that binds the family is very strong in Grobogan, so individual decisions often have to yield to the collective will of the family. "Sometimes, I feel like I'm not free to choose a partner. All decisions must go through family deliberation," he said (Suliyem, 2024). This shows that in a society with close family relationships, women's rights are often neglected.

Hartini, a 40-year-old unmarried woman, recounted her experience of feeling pressured to choose a partner according to the expectations of her parents and society. He revealed that even though he has a partner he loves, he has objected to a decision that should involve the approval of the extended family. "I've found a partner I like, but I have to wait

for the approval of the extended family, and it makes me feel helpless," said Hartini (Hartini, 2024). This statement reflects how women in Grobogan still rely heavily on family authority in determining their life partners.

Kasmiyati, who is 25 years old and has been married for 25 years, revealed that although she had the right to choose her partner, she felt she did not have full freedom in choosing a partner when she was younger. Kasmiyati explained that at that time, women were more often given a "choice" between a partner who had been chosen by the family or living without marriage. "When I was young, I wasn't given many options. My parents have already chosen, and I can only accept," he said (Kasmiyati, 2024). Kasmiyati's experience shows how dominant patriarchal values limited women's freedom to choose a partner in the past, which may still be the case today.

Surati, who is 45, also revealed that although she does not feel forced to choose a particular partner, she still feels pressured by the social expectations around her. "The people here expect women to get married at a certain age, and if they don't, they are considered strange or too picky," she said (Surati, 2024). This shows how local social and cultural norms play a role in shaping perceptions of partner choice, leading to gender inequality in life partner selection.

In this context, the perspective of gender justice and feminism theory is very relevant to explain the obstacles faced by women in choosing a partner in Grobogan Regency. Gender justice theory emphasizes that all individuals should have an equal opportunity to make important decisions in their lives, including when it comes to marriage. However, in the context of Grobogan, patriarchal social structures and strong cultural norms inhibit women's right to make decisions freely. As John Rawls explains in his theory of justice, every individual should be treated equally without discrimination, which means women should have complete freedom to choose their partners without unfair external influences.

In addition, feminist theories, which focus on the liberation of women from oppressive structures, also provide insight into how gender inequality affects women's right to choose a partner (Ufairroh, 2024). Feminism demands recognition of women's voices and defies social norms that reinforce male dominance in many aspects of life, including marriage (Sayyaf et al., 2024). In this regard, the feminist perspective provides the basis for efforts to

change the patriarchal culture that still prevails in Grobogan, which restricts women's right to freely choose their life partners.

Through interviews with women in Grobogan, this study aims to dig deeper into how social and cultural norms affect women's freedom to choose a partner. Despite changes in women's attitudes towards their rights, there are still many challenges to be faced, including resistance to changes in conservative family and societal structures. Therefore, this study aims to provide a deeper insight into these barriers and to suggest steps that can be taken to empower women in Grobogan to be more free in choosing their life partners.

One thing to note is that although women in Grobogan recognize that they have the right to choose a partner, the reality is that many of them do not feel they have full freedom in such decisions. Therefore, in this study, the main focus is to analyze the inhibiting factors that hinder women's right to choose a partner, as well as how gender justice approaches can be applied to improve this situation. In addition, this research will also discuss how awareness and education about gender justice can change public perceptions and provide more freedom for women in choosing their life partners.

Thus, this study aims to provide a deeper insight into women's rights in choosing marriage partners in Grobogan Regency, taking into account the perspective of gender justice. The results of interviews with five women living in this area provide a clear picture of the challenges they face in determining their life partners. By integrating gender justice theory and field interviews, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to women's empowerment efforts in conservative areas such as Grobogan. The table below shows that women in Grobogan face strong pressure from their families and communities in choosing a partner, especially regarding social status and customary norms. All respondents felt that their right to vote was limited, despite having a desire to be freer. This reflects the still strong patriarchal culture that hinders gender justice, so cultural change and legal support are needed to strengthen women's autonomy in marriage. More details are illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. Women's Challenges in Choosing a Partner in Grobogan

Respondent's Name	Age	Experience in Choosing a Spouse	Factors Influencing Spouse Selection	Perspective on Gender Justice
Rabiah	28	Did not have full freedom to choose a spouse as her parents had already chosen a partner for her.	Family pressure in selecting a partner. Limited freedom to reject parents' choice.	Wants more freedom in choosing a spouse but feels constrained by family norms.
Suliyem	35	Felt pressured by societal expectations to follow her parents' choice of spouse.	Strong influence from family and society in selecting a partner. Family prioritizes the social status of the potential spouse.	Hopes for more freedom for women to choose a partner without societal pressure.
Hartini	40	Had limited choice in selecting a spouse because her family prioritized social status over personal preference.	Family prioritized the social status and background of the potential spouse over her personal feelings.	Desires gender justice in choosing a partner without considering social status.
Kasmiyati	25	Family selected a partner for her based on social status, even though she had feelings for someone else.	Family pressure prioritizing social status and concerns about societal opinions.	Wants freedom to choose a partner based on personal feelings.
Surati	45	Was engaged since adolescence without the opportunity to get to know her fiancé better.	Decision made by the family at a young age with no chance to choose based on personal desire.	Feels deprived of her right to choose a partner and hopes for cultural change.

Based on the **table**, it can be concluded that women in Grobogan still face various challenges in choosing a life partner freely. Family pressure, dominance of social status, and

patriarchal cultural norms are the main factors that limit women's autonomy. Most respondents felt that their right to choose a partner was taken away by family decisions that prioritized collective will over personal preferences. Although women have an awareness of these rights, they are still hampered by strong social constructs. Therefore, cultural and policy changes that support gender justice are needed so that women have the freedom to choose their partners independently and with dignity.

Implications of Gender Justice in Spouse Selection for Women's Empowerment in Grobogan

The implications of gender justice in partner selection have a significant impact on women's empowerment, both in social and economic contexts (Jim, 2024). Gender justice, which emphasizes equal rights and opportunities for women in the mate selection process, plays an important role in creating relationships based on mutual respect and recognition of individual capacities (Khodijah et al., 2024). From the perspective of women's empowerment, fair selection of spouses can encourage women to actively participate in various aspects of life, including education, work, and family decision-making (Rohmatilah, 2023). Conversely, inequities in mate selection often lead to women's economic and social dependence, which risks exacerbating gender inequalities and limiting women's access to these opportunities (Rahman, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand that gender justice in the selection of spouses is not only related to individual rights, but also as a driving factor in strengthening the position and role of women in society (Husni, 2023). This approach should be encouraged through education, policies that support gender equality, and a broader understanding of the importance of women's empowerment in a more inclusive and equitable social structure (Hidayah, 2023).

The choice of a partner in marriage is one of the fundamental personal rights of every individual (Smith et al., 2023). In the context of women, the right to choose a life partner is an expression of freedom, autonomy, and recognition of gender equality. In Grobogan Regency, Central Java, although it is legally recognized that women have this right, in practice there are often restrictions that affect their freedom to choose a partner. This study aims to uncover how gender justice in partner selection can support women's empowerment, as well as its implications in social, economic, and psychological aspects. Based on interviews with

five women from Grobogan, we will discuss how awareness of women's rights in marriage can have a positive impact on women's empowerment in various sectors of life.

Rabiah, a mother of two from Grobogan Village, revealed that the freedom to choose a partner is very important for her in realizing empowerment. In her interview, she stated (Rabiah, 2024), "If I can choose my life partner freely, I feel more valued and have more control over my life." This shows that autonomous partner selection not only contributes to personal happiness, but also increases women's overall self-confidence and empowerment. Gender justice in this context can provide opportunities for women to be more empowered in various fields, including social and economic.

Suliyem, a long-married woman, revealed that although she feels burdened by her family's expectations in choosing a partner, she still believes that women's empowerment through free choice of partners will bring positive change. "I feel more in control of my life if the decision to choose a partner comes from myself, not just my family," she said (Suliyem, 2024). This confirms that women's right to choose their life partners is directly related to their empowerment in the social aspect, as it gives them the space to determine their own path in life.

From an economic perspective, Kasmiyati shared that choosing a partner who is in accordance with the shared vision and values is one of the important factors in creating family economic stability. "Choosing a good partner can help create prosperity, because we can plan the future together. If I am forced to marry someone who is not suitable, I feel that our economy will not run well," said Kasmiyati (Kasmiyati, 2024). This leads to an understanding that women's empowerment in the context of partner selection can have an impact on the welfare of families and society more broadly.

For Hartini, a young woman who has just finished her education, the right to choose a partner greatly affects her confidence. "If I was forced to follow my parents' choices without considering my wishes, I felt like I was losing control of my life. It will damage my confidence," she said (Hartini, 2024). This statement shows that gender justice in mate selection is not only related to individual freedom, but also to women's psychology, which includes their self-confidence and mental well-being. Awareness of this right can strengthen women's empowerment, both in personal and social life.

Surati, who is newly married, stated (Surati, 2024), "I felt empowered when my family finally gave me the freedom to choose my partner. It helps me feel more independent."

Women's empowerment through the freedom to choose a partner not only impacts their personal lives, but also strengthens their position in society. When women are given the space to choose, they are better able to actively participate in larger social and economic processes.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that gender justice in mate selection is not only important for women's individual freedom, but also contributes to their overall empowerment. The empowerment of women in question includes the social aspect, where women have the freedom to make important decisions in their lives; economic aspect, in which the right choice of partner can affect family stability; and psychological aspects, where this freedom increases women's self-confidence and mental well-being.

Changes in local policies that are more supportive of women's right to choose their life partners can be an important step in realizing gender justice. Education about women's rights in marriage must be provided from an early age to build public awareness about the importance of gender equality. By increasing understanding of women's right to choose a partner, society can reduce social pressures that often hinder women's freedom to choose their life partners.

The recommendations of this study emphasize the importance of advocacy, education, and policy change to increase women's access to their rights to choose a partner in Grobogan Regency. Stronger advocacy can strengthen women's position in society, while education about gender justice can build greater awareness of women's rights (Olatokun, 2024; Wang, 2024). In addition, policies that are more inclusive and support gender equality will provide women with greater space to participate in social and economic life, which in turn will improve women's overall empowerment (Syamanta et al., 2024).

As a concrete step, it is important for the local government in Grobogan Regency to create policies that promote equality in marriage, taking into account women's right to choose their life partners. The government can work with civil society organizations to disseminate information about women's rights to marriage, as well as reduce social stigma that often hinders women's freedom. Thus, women's empowerment can be further developed, and gender justice in the context of marriage can be achieved in a more tangible and sustainable way. The table below shows that the freedom to choose a partner directly strengthens women's empowerment, especially in psychological, social, and economic aspects. Respondents feel more valued, confident, and independent, and are able to create family

stability. This emphasizes the importance of the right to choose a spouse as the foundation of gender justice and sustainable empowerment for women in Grobogan.

Table 2. Implications of Gender Justice in Spouse Selection on Women's Empowerment in Grobogan

Respondent Name	Age	Marital Status	Views on Partner Selection	Impact of Partner Selection on Empowerment	Aspects of Empowerment Affected
Rabiah	28	Married, mother of two	Free partner selection increases a sense of being valued and control over life.	Psychological and social empowerment, enhancing self-confidence and autonomy.	Psychological, Social
Suliyem	35	Married	Believes that free partner selection provides more freedom in life.	Social and psychological empowerment through the freedom to choose.	Psychological, Social
Hartini	40	Married, no children	Believes that the freedom to choose a partner greatly affects self-confidence.	Psychological and social empowerment, increasing autonomy.	Psychological, Social
Kasmiyati	25	Married, mother of three	Choosing the right partner influences family economic stability.	Economic empowerment, creating family financial stability.	Economic
Surati	45	Married, mother of one	Feels more independent when able to choose a life partner.	Social and psychological empowerment, feeling more independent and valued.	Social, Psychological

Based on **Table 2**, it can be concluded that gender justice in the selection of spouses has a significant impact on women's empowerment in Grobogan. Freedom in choosing a partner increases women's sense of self-worth, confidence, and independence, especially in

psychological and social aspects. In addition, choosing the right partner also contributes to the family's economic stability, as experienced by Kasmiyati. These findings show that freedom to choose a partner is not only an individual right, but also an important factor in improving women's overall well-being. Therefore, support for this right needs to be strengthened through education and policies that favor gender justice.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the choice of a partner in marriage is a fundamental right of women that must be respected and maintained as part of gender justice. Case studies in Grobogan Regency show that despite diversity in understanding the right to choose a partner, many women are still hampered by social norms and traditions that prioritize the dominance of family or community decisions. However, women's increasing awareness of their right to choose a partner, especially in the context of social, economic, and psychological empowerment, also has a positive impact on their quality of life. In this case, gender justice is not only a normative issue, but also a practical necessity that must be integrated into local policies that support women's empowerment. This empowerment can be achieved through increasing women's access to education, strengthening policies that support the right to vote in marriage, and increasing women's active participation in the decision-making process at the family and community levels.

Based on the findings of this study, some suggestions that can be put forward include: First, the need to strengthen education and advocacy regarding women's rights in choosing a partner at the community level, so that women are more aware of their rights and have the skills to participate in the family decision-making process. Second, the development of local policies that are more proactive in supporting gender justice, including integrating gender justice aspects in women's empowerment programs in Grobogan Regency. Third, the importance of the active role of civil society organizations and educational institutions in educating the public about the importance of women's empowerment and the right to vote in marriage, so that social change can be achieved more effectively. Fourth, recommendations to develop further studies related to the role of gender justice in other local cultural contexts in Indonesia, in order to provide deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities in realizing gender equality in various regions.

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Interview

Rabiah, *Interview*, September 5, 2024

Suliyem, *Interview*, September 5, 2024

Hartini, *Interview*, September 10, 2024

Kasmiyati, *Interview*, September 10, 2024

Surati, *Interview*, September 10, 2024