### Gender Fair Education as a Counter Feminization of Poverty Movement in Women's Schools in Gresik Regency

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### **Abstract**

This article explores the design and implementation of Gender Fair Education as a counter-feminization of poverty movement in women's schools in Gresik Regency. Based on data from women and gender observers, poverty studies have not paid sufficient attention to the gender dimension of poverty. It was from these data that the expression "women are the poorest of the poor" and the term "feminization of poverty" arose. This article is the result of qualitative-explorative research with a phenomenological approach and data retrieval through observations, interviews, documentation, and focus group discussion. The findings showed that gender-fair education as a counter-feminization of the poverty movement was designed through the Gender Watch program. It is a women's empowerment program through the establishment of women's schools with gender-fair education materials as the curriculum. The implementation of gender-fair education is manifested through the establishment of women's schools in villages in Gresik Regency. The establishment of these schools is appreciated by various parties because it has utilized the potential of local communities in alleviating women's poverty. However, on the other hand, the obstacles faced are patriarchal cultural paradigms that are still deeply rooted in society. In some 'new villages', for example, where the program is replicated, there are still village officials who reject this program, requiring a persuasive approach to educate them about the importance of establishing women's schools.

**Keywords:** Gender Fair Education, Counter Feminization of Poverty, Women's Schools

### A. Introduction

Gresik is one of the largest industrial cities in East Java with an area of 1,193.76 km². Amid the rapid flow of industrialization, the city stores a variety of peculiarities, among which is the issue of feminization of poverty. The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) Gresik 2021 states that in 2020 the percentage of poor citizens in Gresik is 12.40 percent with a poverty line of Rp492.628 or 165.05 inhabitants (Central Bureau of Statistics Gresik, 2021). To make it worse, the poverty rate is mostly contributed to women. It makes this issue a big homework for the Gresik Regency government to alleviate poverty in its environment.

Inequality of access to education and skills development is suspected to be one of the causes. According to a report by the Development Planning Agency at the Sub-National Level (Bappeda) of East Java province, 3,841 women in Gresik are in socio-economic vulnerable status (women who underperform in social economy). Not to mention the relatively large number of women who do not attend school in Gresik (Central Bureau of Statistics Gresik, 2009). Another peculiar problem is that child marriage is still scattered in this city, causing women vulnerable to divorce, sexual violence, or domestic violence. The next peculiarity is the transition of agricultural land to the industrial sector. This land transfer has a significant impact on the economic condition of the Gresik society, especially women

who work as farmers or farm laborers. Therefore, inevitably to survive, women are desperate to become migrant workers such as in Malaysia, because of the economic demands of the family.

However, the values of "friendship-companionship" and mutual cooperation in Gresik give a glimmer of hope for gender equality and justice. Gender-fair education as a form of counter-feminization of poverty through women's schools in Gresik is interesting to be studied further especially, related to its achievement, support, implementation, and challenges. In some literature reviews, gender-fair education as a counter feminization can be classified into three things, namely academic discourse (Asrohah & Idayatni, 2020; Mardia, 2014; Qibtiyah, 2009; Rohmah & Ulinnuha, 2014), implementation in the field (Asrohah & Idayatni, 2020; Hambali, 2017; Kull, 2012; Naily, 2008), and authority policy (Aisyah, 2012; Rasyidah & Aini, 2009; Tahir, 2016).

Based on the literature review above, this study complements the existing study by taking the distinction in the form of a case study on women's schools in Gresik Regency, East Java. This case presents a portrait of the grassroots women's movement in rural areas in Gresik Regency to get out of poverty. There are several factors why this case becomes important to be presented, including a very massive industrialization process in Gresik, Gresik is adjacent to Surabaya and Sidoarjo as the second largest city in Indonesia and the National Economic buffer, and its poverty feminization is quite alarming. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explain the design and implementation of Gender Fair Education as an effort to counter feminization of poverty in women's schools in Gresik Regency. This study includes qualitative-explorative research with a phenomenological approach. Data collection through observations, in-depth interviews, documentation, and focus group discussion. Data analysis using rational-qualitative techniques.

### **B.** Discussion

### a. Gender Fair Education (PAG): An Overview

Gender issues remain a hot topic in this country, especially in the era of disruption and the Covid-19 pandemic, which is increasingly occupying the top position in academic discourse. Gender mainstreaming is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the National Long-Term Development Plan (RJPN) for 2005-2025 (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2020). This step is the realization of the country's commitment to empowering and protecting women and children.

Statistically, women's achievements are still lagging behind those of men. In fact, the participation of women has a central role, not merely as an object of development but also the agents of development or change. Women have survival ability, resilience, and fighting power for themselves. They can even ensure the stability of the safety and comfort of those around her including family (Kull, 2012). However, the role of women in the pre-Islamic era as well as in the West tends to be no more than just an object of sexual satisfaction (second sex) (Fealy, 2006; Rahmawati, 2020; Shash & Forden, 2016; Syed & Ali, 2019; Wartini, 2016).

Even violence, oppression, and the like often befell women. Based on the data of the Women and Children Protection Online Information System (Simfoni PPA) from January-December 2019, there have been 8,745 cases of violence against adult women. Of these cases, 65,26% of which are cases of domestic violence both physically and psychologically (SIMFONI-PPA, 2019). In addition, ILO 2021 data shows that during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was women who felt the most impact of degradation

in their role in the financial and public sectors (Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 on the Garment Sector, n.d.).

Not only violence, but restrictions on the role of women in various fields are inevitable. The public sector, for example, appears to be seen from the political atmosphere that is predominantly dominated by men. The number of women who occupy political chairs is still far below the affirmation limit of representing 30 percent of women. At the managerial and professional level, including ASN (State Civil Apparatus), the number of women is still low. Although it cannot be denied, the role of women in the public sector shows progress compared to the colonial era and the last decade (Menteri PPPA: 6 Juta Perempuan Sudah Diberdayakan Kewirausahaan Dengan 37.000 Pendamping, n.d.).

Gender fair education is implemented through women's empowerment programs that are intensively promoted by the government, including entrepreneurship programs from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA). I Gusti Bintang Puspayoga as the Minister of PPPA stated that there are 6 million women who are empowered from high school and bachelor's degrees with 37,000 facilitators. empowerment, said the Minister of PPPA, is carried out through cooperation with PT. Permodalan Nasional Madani (PNM), one of the SOEs (Menteri PPPA: 6 Juta Perempuan Sudah Diberdayakan Kewirausahaan Dengan 37.000 Pendamping, n.d.). This kind of program is still rarely manifested let alone the mainstreamed one. Hence it requires integration and synergy between the ministry and the private sector, as well as the society to support such programs.

However, the feminization of poverty in Gresik Regency still leaves a big homework for the Regency government. In this context, Gender Fair Education (PAG) as a counter feminization of poverty movement finds its point of significance. PAG as a consequence of the existence of Education for All is an inevitability (Slavin, 1996). PAG includes education that derives from Gender Equality and Justice (KKG).

Conceptually, PAG is an education that puts gender equality and justice, there is no discrimination between men and women, and all people are equal and deserve the same access to adequate education (Hutchinson, 1995). In other words, Puspitawati stated that the basic concept of Gender Fair Education (PAG) as a consequence of Education for All (PUS) is part of Education based on Gender Equality and Justice (KKG). The word "all" on Education for All (PUS) means very broad, universal, and firm, that is for all human beings, whether wealthy families vis a vis poor families, young, old, children of workers, children of employers, men, and women. Thus, conceptually, gender-perspective education is a sub-set of Education for all (PUS) and the right to education as one of the components of human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (HAM) approved by the UN General Assembly on November 20, 1989 (Puspitawati, et.al, 2019).

There are four aspects in PAG, namely the strategic environment of education, equity and justice in education, the quality and relevance of education, and education management. In Spain, for example, gender awareness has been well developed. Muslim women believe that in Islam, through-to borrow Redfield's term– great tradition (Quran and Hadith) (Redfield, 1955), men and women have equal status, and there is no gender discrimination (Mendoza et al., 2021). Gender Fair Education (PAG) is carried out in a planned and systematic manner with a

managerial approach. PAG involves the experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of women and men who aim to promote teaching and learning about gender equality (Rahmatullah, 2020; Widodo & Elyas, 2020).

In addition, the implementation of PAG-borrowing -needs to be carried out based on Zeinada's ideas five principles, namely: (1) all learners have the right to a Gender-Fair learning environment; (2) educational programs and career paths should be based on the interests and abilities of learners, regardless of gender; (3) PAG includes social strata, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and age; (4) PAG requires sensitivity, determination, commitment, and vigilance; (5) the basis of PAG is cooperation, collaboration, and synergy among students, teachers, and related stakeholders in negating patriarchal ideology in the classroom. (Quezada-Reyes, 2000) These five principles should be used as a foothold in organizing PAG, especially in this context in Gresik Regency, and do not rule out other regions in Indonesia.

The idea of PAG received special attention from the Indonesian female figure, R.A. Kartini. In her first letter to Stella on May 25, 1899, Kartini said:

"... to the "modern girl" I am proud of, the self-sufficient girl who sympathizes with her... who works incessantly not for her well-being and happiness, but for the good of humanity as a whole. My deceased grandfather was the first Regent in Central Java. All his children received European education, which is the highest institution at that time. We girls, far from adequate access to education, are trapped and shackled by our traditions and ancient paradigms. We didn't gain anything. It is a great crime if we get an education, or have to leave home to attend school. This paradigm restrained

girls from going outside the house. When I was 12, I was put under house arrest, in a "box". I was locked up and cut off from access to communication and education with the outside world..." (Qibtiyah, 2009; Symmers & Geertz, 1964).

Kartini's letter implicitly told many people that at the end of the 19th century, women could not access education freely. Although initially Kartini was allowed to attend school because her father was a regent at that time, she was eventually forced to return to patriarchal customs at the age of 12. Kartini thought that the right of girls to education is the only effective way to achieve emancipation and address the problems of inequality, oppression, and discrimination against all women. It does not mean that women neglect their obligations and nature as women, but Kartini believes that if women are well educated, it will bring benefits and goodness to all people. A woman is the mother and the first teacher in the house (Al-umm Al madrasah Al-ula fi Al-bayt) and is the moral foundation of society (Vreede-de Stuers, 1960).

### b. Gender Watch: The Gender Fair Women's School

Gender Watch program has spawned many women's schools as a Gender-Fair Education forum for the counter feminization of poverty movement in Gresik Regency. Gender Fair Women's School is an educational approach to create a fair and inclusive learning environment for all participants, especially women, where gender roles are not an obstacle to achieving their full potential. This concept acknowledges the existence of a gender gap in education and seeks to address the problem in a way centered on gender equality.

Gender-Fair Women's Schools are aligned with Gender-Fair Education from the way the manifestation of this school puts the paradigm of gender equality and justice, i.e., there is no discrimination between men and women both at the paradigm and praxis level. These schools aim to ensure that all participants, including women, have equal access to excellent education. It can be done by removing physical and social barriers that might hinder women's participation and involvement in education.

In terms of curriculum, the school composes a curriculum that is inclusive and reflects the experiences, contributions, and achievements of women in history, science, art, and various other fields. Through this curriculum, it can provide a more balanced picture of the role and contribution of women in society, and inspire participants to achieve high achievements. Gender Fair Women's Schools place gender equality and inclusion at the core of their education, expecting to create a more justice and equal world for all individuals, regardless of their gender. (Hasanah, 2019).

Gender-Fair Women's Schools also work to address gender stereotypes and expectations that limit students' roles and aspirations based on gender. It allows participants, including women, to pursue their interests and talents freely without being limited by rigid gender norms. In addition, the school also provides gender training for educators so that they can be more sensitive to gender issues and understand how to create an inclusive and fair learning environment for all participants. These schools also involve families and communities, to create a gender-fair environment, contribute to solving problems, and support students in learning and growing without gender restrictions (Handayani, 2019).

The women's schools teach materials with a gender equality and justice perspective. The names and gait of these women's schools can be seen in the following description (Yunus, 2015).

First, Pembawa Perubahan Women's School. Pembawa Perubahan Women's School (SP3) was founded by six people from Buku sub-village, Mondoluku village. The name of Pembawa Perubahan Women's School is a hope that its students can become women's agents of change for themselves, their families, villages, and the country. This women's school comprises a Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer, and 14 members. It is expected that through Pembawa Perubahan Women's School, women will understand the flow of social Program Assistance, be smart in educating children and can solve family problems, has a cooperative that provides women's needs and has the capital to live independently, can solve family and social problems, and change the lifestyle of Mondoluku women (child marriage).

Second, The Dlangu Semangat Women's School. Dlangu Semangat Women's School (SPDS) was founded by 14 people from Dlangu sub-village, Mondoluku village. The women's group from Dlangu sub-village said that the school has become a Semangat Women's School which means that even though marginal and poor women are currently still in a disadvantaged condition, they must continue to be enthusiastic and encourage other women to keep learning to change their fate. This women's school comprises a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer, and has 31 members (Yunus, 2015). It is expected that the establishment of this women's school will make women understand the flow of assistance, develop skills (sewing, cooking, etc.), can solve family problems, change the pattern of child marriage in

Mondoluku village, can read and write fluently, and have the capital to live independently.

Third, Bangkit Women's School. The women's group in the RanduSongo sub-village, Kesamben Kulon Village, formed and named the school Bangkit Women's School (SPB). This name was chosen because this women's school became an early awareness of their lack of information and lagging behind which makes them easy to be lied to and tricked into all access that should be their right. Through this women's school, they are committed to awakening themselves to change their fate. The women's school comprises a head, a secretary, and a treasurer, and has 23 members (Yunus, 2015). It is expected that Bangkit Women's School students will actively monitor social assistance, establish a compact women's organization, have entrepreneurial skills, create activities to improve the family economy and learn to read, write, and learn about women's health.

Fourth, Hebat Women's School. The women's group in Kulon sub-village, Kesamben Kulon village called itself Hebat Women's School (SPH). This name was chosen based on the spirit of women who are considered weak by going back to school and they will be born to be great women and agents of change. The women's school comprises a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer, and has 25 members. It is expected that Hebat Women's School students will actively monitor social assistance, become a woman who understands happy households, establish a compact women's organization, has entrepreneurial skills, and increases family income (Yunus, 2015).

Fifth, Maju Berjuang Women School. The women's group in Wetan sub-village, Kesamben Kulon Village, gave the name Maju Berjaya Women's School (SPMB) in

the hope that this women's school could be a struggle to lift the fate of poor women so that women would always be considered and involved in all aspect of society. The women's school comprises a head, a secretary, and a treasurer, and has 23 students. It is expected that the establishment of this women's school will supervise social assistance from the government, women will understand happy households, fight for the rights of poor women, have entrepreneurial skills, and increase family income.

Sixth, Mandiri Women's School. The women's group in Krajan sub-village, Kesamben Kulon village, named their group Mandiri Women's School (SPM). This name was chosen because during this time women were considered second citizens or humans and were always not involved in any aspect of society. This reason makes them choose the word Mandiri as a vision that women can have autonomy for their bodies both economically and politically. The school comprises a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer, and has 22 members (Yunus, 2015). It is expected that the establishment of this women's school will supervise social assistance from the government, women will understand happy households, fight for the rights of poor women, have entrepreneurial skills, and increase family income.

Seventh, Pembawa Kemajuan Women's School. Pembawa Kemajuan Women's School (SPPK) from Kidul sub-village, Kesamben Kulon village. From this name, it is expected that women who are members of this school become leaders who bring progress for themselves and other women in their villages. This women's school comprises a chairman, a treasurer, and a secretary, and has 33 members. It is expected that this school will actively monitor social assistance, women will understand happy households, establish a compact women's organization,

has entrepreneurial skills, and increases family income (Yunus, 2015).

Eighth, Suka Belajar Women's School. The women's group in Kluwong sub-village, Kesamben Kulon village, called itself Suka Belajar Women's School (SPSB) since they have a very high spirit of learning regardless of age even though they were married at an early age. This women's school comprises a chairman, a treasurer, and a secretary, and has 22 members. It is expected that this women's school will actively monitor social assistance, women will understand happy households, give development proposals to villages, learn to read and write, and increase family income.

Ninth, Sejati Women's School. The women's group in Randusongo Village, Kesamben Kulon village, called itself Sekolah Perempuan Sejati (SPS) based on the idea of R.A. Kartini who has provided opportunities for poor women to study during impossible conditions. By learning continuously, poor women can become true leaders. This women's school comprises a chairman, a treasurer, a secretary, and has 17 members. It is expected that the establishment of this women's school will maintain the health of the family (mother and child), women learn to express opinions, create women's cooperatives, and have entrepreneurial skills (Yunus, 2015).

Tenth, Suka Tani Women's School. The women's group in Genengan sub-village, Kesamben Kulon village, named itself Suka Tani Women's School (SPST) because they love to farm and hope to be successful farmers even though they are still farm workers without having their own land. The school comprises a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer, and has 17 members. It is expected that the establishment of this women's school will improve their ability in agriculture, women can make their families

happy, learn to read and write, solve family problems, and develop entrepreneurial skills (Yunus, 2015).

The results of the implementation of women's schools can be seen from the participation of women in the village. As stated by the director of KPS2K: "Before participating in women's schools, women felt embarrassed and afraid by only going to the village hall. They did not dare to speak. When the KPS2K team gave a briefing, they were even busy gossiping, but after this women's school was running, they began to try to respect others, be more active to ask and give their opinions. It is very different before they participated in women's schools" (Hasanah, 2019).

A similar statement was also expressed by one of the members of the women's school: "Before joining a women's school, I thought, what is a women's school? No money, just a waste of time. But after joining it, it turned out to be fun too. We learned the difference between sex and gender, women's poverty, and women's rights. In the past, I did not dare to speak in front of many people, now I dare to express my opinion" (Lusiana, 2019).

The above statement shows that the output of women's schools is increasing the participation of village women. In the past, they were only passive in monitoring the performance of the village government, now they can voice their opinions after attending a women's school. Other benefits felt by members of women's schools are that they had a better understanding of their rights as women and recognize the existence of domestic violence and have solutions to overcome it.

Domestic violence that used to be committed by husbands to their wives seemed to be a natural thing that happened for women before women's schools were organized. In women's schools, women were taught to know women's rights and be aware of domestic violence. They were also taught how to report domestic violence experienced by themselves or their neighbors with assistance from the KPS2K and the Gresik Regency government. This effort reduces the amount of domestic violence that most husbands commit against their wives.

Another benefit that appears after attending a women's school is the participation of women in expressing pro-women opinions. The participation of members of this women's school was shown in attendance and expressed their opinions in the Musrembangdes (village development planning meeting). In the past, women's participation in Musrembangdes was only to fulfill the 30% quota to make the meeting become a quorum. Some of the proposals that were submitted by representatives of women's schools at the Musrembangdes include 1) request The Gresik Regency (Vernanda, 2015): government to provide educational facilities to pursue elementary, junior, and senior high school equivalency; 2) request The Village Government to conduct periodic reproductive health checks; 3) request to be held women skills improvement through training such as increasing people's income through livestock training, making crafts and training in the use of Technology and Information.

The many changes that have been achieved by women's groups that were once marginalized show significant progress in women's schools. This indicates that this women's school is feasible to be implemented in all villages in Gresik Regency and Indonesia. Currently, the practice of Gender Fair Education as a counterfeminization of poverty movement through the Gender Watch program is replicated in 15 villages in Gresik Regency (Wardani, 2019).

Of the number of women's schools in Gresik Regency, they are networked with each other. This kind of network certainly aims to encourage gender equality in education, provide specific support for women in achieving career success, or deal with specific issues relevant to women's education. The development of knowledge, networking, capacity building, and other activities undertaken by the implementers of the Gender Watch program has an important role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

One of the main roles of Gender Watch is the development of knowledge on relevant gender and women's issues as well as research and analysis on gender and women's issues. Better knowledge also increases public awareness and understanding of the importance of gender equality and women's rights. In terms of networking, Gender Watch builds cooperation with various organizations and institutions, including governments, NGOs, and the private sector, to fight for gender equality. In terms of capacity building, Gender Watch conducts training and capacity building for stakeholders, including government, employees, society activists, and others. This activity was conducted to improve their understanding of gender issues and skills in applying an inclusive approach. Capacity building of individuals and groups helps to strengthen their roles and participation in advancing gender equality (Fahmi, 2016).

In addition, Gender Watch is also involved in other activities, such as campaigning, advocacy, mentoring, and the formation of more inclusive policies. These activities help change people's attitudes and behaviors, as well as improve the government's response to gender and women's issues. This holistic and diverse approach enables Gender Watch to contribute effectively to

advancing gender equality and women's empowerment at various levels. As a whole, through the development of knowledge, networking, capacity building, and other activities, Gender Watch plays a key role in shaping a more inclusive, equitable, and equal society for all genders.

# c. Gender Fair Education (PAG) as a counter feminization of poverty

Gender equality is a global priority for UNESCO and is closely linked to its efforts to promote the right to education and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Education Agenda 2030 acknowledge that gender equality requires an approach that 'ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete the educational cycle but are equally empowered within and through education (UNESCO, 2022).

UNESCO's work in education and gender equality is guided by UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education (2019-2025) and UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan (2014-2021, 2019 revision). The strategy concern on system-wide transformation to benefit all learners equally, and support targeted actions for the empowerment of girls and women across three priority areas: better data, better policies, and better practices (UNESCO, 2022). Large gender gaps lie within access, learning achievement and the continuation of education in many places, most commonly at the expense of girls, while in some places boys are also disadvantaged. Despite the progress, girls outnumber boys by a staggering 16 million girls who have never set foot in a classroom (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) – and women make up two-thirds of the 750 million adults without basic literacy skills (UNESCO, 2022).

The problem of poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, child marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, traditional attitudes of women's role and status, are among the many barriers that prevent women and girls from fully exercising their right to participate in, complete and benefit from education.

In this context, Gender Fair Education as a movement against feminization of poverty, especially in Gresik regency, is crucial to be implemented and replicated as part of efforts – to a certain extent – to close the gender gap that has been tormenting and becoming a serious problem for the government of Gresik regency. In terms of Gender Fair Education activities format, the design of Gender Watch program will be implemented. Gender Watch program in Gresik regency, which is run by Kelompok Perempuan dan Sumber-Sumber Kehidupan (KPS2K) – an Indonesian NGO that engages women and girls in rural communities on gender inequality, with the assistance of Aus-Aid, Institute for Women's Alternative Education (KAPAL Perempuan), and Gresik regency government, aims to empower women by establishing women's schools with curriculum centered on gender fair education (Sasmita, 2019).

As a counter-feminization of poverty movement, Gender Fair Education employs the perspective and analysis of gender and pluralism as its major instrument, gradually gaining positive acceptance from the society (Syaifuddin et al., 2019). In order to address the feminization of poverty through gender fair education, three aspects are highlighted in the analysis of gender and pluralism. *First*, gender and pluralism analysis assures that poor and marginalized women can participate fully in development processes. *Second*, gender and pluralism analysis guarantees the affordability of development

programs to poor and marginalized groups of women, allowing them to benefit the program and ultimately lift themselves out of poverty. *Third*, gender and pluralism analysis encourages the government to adopt gender justice-based policies that are targeted to the needs of the poor, marginal groups, and minorities (summary of the Gender Watch Report, 2013).

Women's participation and leadership in the planning, implementation and utilization of development projects in general can be improved by promoting the counter-feminization of poverty movement through gender fair education. The entire process is intended to strengthen democratization process at local levels as it is one manifestation of the government's efforts to apply the principles of good governance to be as effective as society expected (summary of Gender Watch Report, 2013).

Gender Fair Education, as a counter-feminization of poverty movement, aims: (1) To increase poor women's awareness of their poverty condition in order to build their capacity to fight and escape poverty; (2) To encourage the government to recognize the value of promoting society development in poor women's societies; (3) To advocate the implementation of good governance concepts and processes, particularly participation, openness and accountability; (4) To improve the development effectiveness at the local level to ensure its implementation is integrated with the process of increasing women's involvement and leadership; (5) To analyze various policies associated to development programs, considering the interests and priorities of the parties, particularly women and poor, marginalized and minority groups in rural areas.

As part of the Gender Fair Education program and counter feminization of poverty movement in

Gresik regency, efforts are made to increase awareness of poor women's condition, action against poverty and literacy initiatives that promote development. In this case, there are four key actions implemented (Fahmi, 2016). *First*, Knowledge Development regarding with women's social conditions and leadership. The activities within knowledge development include research on feminization of poverty and its impact on women's well-being and involvement in the public sphere.

Second, Data-based Advocacy is implemented by conducting data-based advocacy at the district and village levels and collaborating with local governments to design policies and budgets allocation that ensure poor women and other marginalized groups may have access to government programs. Third, Capacity Building includes women's leadership trainings for poor women, developing poor women's groups as their learning centers, facilitating poor women's participation in development planning at the village, sub-district and district levels. Fourth, Networking involves developing public relations and networks as well as conducting public campaigns to educate poor women about their rights as individuals, women and citizens (Fahmi, 2016).

Based on the explanation above, Gender Fair Education program is developed as a counter-feminization of poverty movement by involving parties that act to support the movement's implementation. The counter feminization of poverty movement through Gender Fair Education is one of the attempts to empower poor and marginal women. Knowledge Development, Data-based Advocacy, Capacity Building and Networking are all parts of a sequence of interconnected actions.

## d. Implementation of Gender Fair Education in Women's Schools

Gender Fair Education is being implemented in women's schools in Gresik regency as a counterfeminization of poverty movement through the Gender Watch program. This program was initially conducted in two villages (Kesamben Kulon and Mondoluku) of Wringinanom sub-district, Gresik regency. Afterward, it is expanded into two other villages in the same sub-district i.e., Sumber Gede and Sooko. The program is currently being adapted in fifteen (15) communities in Gresik Regency (Ambarwati, 2019).

In this context, village empowerment becomes a necessity. Village is the foundation of regional growth, yet it tends to be neglected by local governments, resulting in societies falling behind in development. This is noticeable in the villages where the Gender Watch Program is being implemented. In terms of access to education, educational institutions and infrastructure are severely inadequate and quite remote.

Data from Central Bureau of Statistics Gresik exhibits that Wringinanom sub-district has only four upper level schools, including one high school and three vocational schools. The considerable distance from home to school as well as the damaged roadways caused it challenging for the local societies of those four villages to obtain higher education. Other factors influencing the lack of interest in pursuing higher education include the majority perception of high-priced educational tuition fee and the great distance required the parents' to allocate more transportation expenses for purchasing a motorcycle for their children. As a result, the majority of locals opt out of continuing their children's education (Kholis, 2019).

This reinforces the findings obtained at the research location that the level of education attained by residents is mostly limited to elementary and/or junior high school, and there is still illiterate society – the majority of whom are women. Furthermore, the society's perception of education as secondary and more concerned with economic issues has resulted in little interest in getting a higher level of education. As a result, when children stop attending school, parents tends to ask them to get job or marry off their children, which is commonly happened to women (Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection., 2022; Sugeng, 2019).

Majority of parents who are unable to afford education for their children will put their male children to work and marry off their female children. They see marriage as a way to improve their children's prosperity, even though their children's future husbands may not have steady jobs and incomes. Many girls are married at relatively young ages—between 13 and 16. It has become as though a tradition for parents to marry off their daughters who have considerably grown up (Kiemas, 2019).

In terms of health, society awareness is equally low in the research area. This is evident in the various occurrences of health concerns that have occurred in the research area. Mostly society in Sooko Village frequently disregard midwife referrals—in which when they receive a reference from a local midwife to bring the sick person to hospital, they do not take the sick person to the hospital right away, but rather to another midwife. Sumber Gede Village suffers from health issues as well. This is due to the society's lack of understanding on how to use the government's social health insurance. Mondoluku village is arguably better for its health quality than the

other villages in the study area (Kesamben Kulon, Sooko). Based on the administration data of Mondoluku Village, the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) are not recorded (Kiemas, 2019).

The aforementioned issues then become a reason to initiate Gender Watch Program in those villages. The Gender Watch Program is a collaborative monitoring of social protection programs implemented by civil society, the government, and beneficiary groups to ensure that social protection programs are targeted and beneficial to women, marginalized groups and the poor society.

The Gender Watch program, which includes a movement to counter the feminization of poverty through gender fair education, is a collaborative program between Gresik regency government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) such as Kelompok Perempuan dan Sumber-Sumber Kehidupan (KPS2K) and Institute for Women's Alternative Education (KAPAL Perempuan). This collaboration was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Gresik regency government, KPS2K and KAPAL Perempuan Jakarta on 12 August 2014.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to help poor women and marginalized groups become eligible to access and benefit from Social Protection Development and Social Assistance Program in order to uphold their rights. The signing of this MoU aims to: (1) Increase poor women's and marginalized groups' participation and leadership in the evaluation of Development Program, specifically the Social Protection and Social Assistance Program, through their participation in the Gender Watch Program; and (2) Provide technical assistance by Gresik regency government on Social Protection and Assistance Development Program to

women and marginalized groups through institutional improvements and budgetary allocations in accordance with Local Finance; (3) Reinforce the data collection process in the Gresik regency required by an inclusive and transformative gender-based social protection system; (4) Policies-making and budgeting according to the ability of Local Finance in the implementation of Gresik regency government's Social Protection and Social Assistance Program as part of Gender Watch program (MoU Document, 2014).

MoU between Gresik regency government, KPS2K, and KAPAL Perempuan Jakarta also regulates the division of labor in the implementation of the Gender Watch program. The division of labor in question includes: First, Gresik regency government provides legalization and facilitation for the implementers of the Gender Watch Program, which consists of the Regency Monitoring Team and the Community Monitoring Team, which is afterwards known as the Regional Monitoring Committee. Second, providing accurate and disaggregated poverty data as the basis for implementing the Social Protection and Social Assistance Development Program. Third, forming a Regional Poverty Reduction Coordination Team (TKPKD) and increasing the capacity of regional officials. Fourth, increasing the participation and leadership of poor women and other marginalized groups in the Social Protection and Social Assistance Program through development planning, implementation and monitoring (MoU Document, 2014).

The second division of labor implemented by Kelompok Perempuan dan Sumber-Sumber Kehidupan (KPS2K) includes three tasks, i.e.: (1) Strengthening the capacity of Gender Watch implementers in organizing activities to uphold the rights of women and other

marginalized groups; (2) Providing technical assistance to Gresik Regency Government in the implementation and institutionalization of Gender Watch results leads to Pro-Poor and Pro-Gender policies and budgeting according to the financial capacity of Gresik government; (3) Assisting and organizing Gender Watch and leadership participation of poor women and marginalized groups in the society according to the principles of openness and equality.

Institute for Women's Alternative Education (KAPAL Perempuan) performed the third division of labor, with the task domain focusing on: (1) Facilitating and providing technical assistance to the Gresik regency government and KPS2K in forming a Gender Watch implementation team tasked with implementing and advocating for Gender Watch results; (2) Facilitating support from the Central Government through the formation of Gender Watch personnel at the central level consisting of Social Protection Program; (3) Facilitating the process of building and strengthening alternative data from the society through participatory research methods in the Gender Watch process (MoU Document, 2014).

The implementation of the Gender Watch Program as a counter-feminization of poverty through gender justice education began in 2013 in two villages, Kesamben Kulon Village and Mondoluku Village, and expanded to two more villages in 2015, Sumber Gede Village and Sooko Village. In 2017, Gresik Regency Government procreated the program to 8 villages, and in 2019 to 15 villages.

Gender Watch Program has several goals, including: (1) To raise awareness among government and women's groups who benefit from the program about the importance of conducting joint assessments of poverty reduction programs; (2) To increase the effectiveness and

excellence of poverty reduction programs at the local level; (3) To analyze various policies related to poverty reduction programs and considering and prioritizing the parties, particularly women, poor and marginalized groups as the final beneficiaries of poverty reduction programs; (4) To promote the enforcement of good governance principles and processes; (5) To find out the extent to which poverty reduction program may create gaps, one of which is gender disparity (Yunus, 2015).

The implementation of Gender Fair Education as a counter-feminization of poverty movement in Gender Watch program has several benefits, including the growth of society engagement, particularly among poor women and other marginalized groups. In addition to that, local democratic processes have created justice and welfare for these groups. Hence, in the development process, greater attention is being devoted to the groups that previously received little to no attention. The program has also contributed to the establishment of a group decision-making process, responsibility division, human resources (HR), and strong social capital. Along with these benefits, proposals for future poverty reduction policies, budgets, and program designs are also provided (Gender Watch Document, 2015).

Gender Fair Education then targeted to reach the goals as follow: (1) Ensuring that poor and marginalized women's groups can actively participate in monitoring team in the society; (2) Ensuring the affordability of social security programs for poor and marginalized women's groups ensuring they can take advantage of the benefits and ultimately lift themselves out of poverty; (3) Promoting policies that support the needs of the poor, marginalized groups, minorities, and gender justice, as

well as effective governance and democracy processes (Gender Watch Document, 2015).

Agents from the village are required to monitor whether or not social protection programs are on track. Due to the difficulty in locating monitoring agents from the village as a result of gender injustice suffered by women in the research location, KPS2K as the Gender Watch program's implementer, established a women's school. This school was established with the goal of developing monitoring agents for social protection programs through education and training for women in communities.

Women's school activities run practically every day by KPS2K and are frequently held at the village hall. The curriculum presented also derived from KPS2K which covered some important subjects, i.e. reading and writing for illiterate women, leadership fundamentals, women's rights, gender and sex differences, understanding the significance of health and raising awareness of domestic abuse.

### e. Support and Challenges for Gender Fair Education

The government of Gresik regency, in addition to KPS2K as the implementer and teacher of the women's school, works to improve the quality of women through education and empowerment. This is in line with the statement of KPS2K team, "Gresik regency government, through the Family Planning and Women's Empowerment Agency (BKBPP), plays an active role in the implementation of Gender Fair Education as a counter-feminization of poverty movement, by activating institutions exist in the village, such as Youth Organization (Karang Taruna), Family Welfare Program (PKK), Research and Community Services Institute

(LPPM), and LKMD—a village community forum, to get skills training to improve welfare." (Handayani, 2019).

As part of the counter-feminization of poverty movement, Gresik regency government, through BKBPP, executes the Work Plan to execute Gender Fair Education program by implementing the following programs. *First*, Quality of Life Improvement and Women's Protection Program to protect women from acts of violence; Gerakan Sayang Ibu or Motherhood Program and P2WKSS coaching groups to improve women's skills. *Second*, Participation Improvement and Gender Equality for Development Program, which aims to improve participation and gender equality through the development of women's groups, education, and training (Mardhiyaningsih, 2019).

BKBPP also provides meeting space, as well as proposing the establishment of "Rumah Curhat" (counseling house), a building that serves as a facility to vent society concerns, particularly about domestic violence. In addition to that facility, BKBPP also offered instructional game tools (known as Bina Keluarga Kid) and Family Planning guides. BKBPP has promised to enhance the role of Posyandu (center(s) for pre- and postnatal health care and information) presence in each village where the program is being implemented. Posyandu is regarded as the basis for children's development and progress in order to produce a better future generation.

Additionally, BKBPP offered skills training in the creation of bridal presents, cakes, bags and *songket*. This training is expected to increase the income of women's families. BKBPP also provides socialization on gender equality, reproductive health and women's rights (Mardhiyaningsih, 2019).

The government of Gresik regency has also expressed interest in signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Gender Watch program, a movement to counter the feminization of poverty through Gender Fair Education. This MoU provides a starting point for the program's success. The sub-district and village governments will also support this initiative through this MoU.

Funding is also provided by the government to improve the facilities of women's school in Gresik regency. The annual budget for 15 villages is approximately Rp200.000.000 (two hundred million rupiah). This budget is still rather limited, but with this financing allocation, the government has at least supported the counterfeminization of poverty through Gender Fair Education (Mardhiyaningsih, 2019).

Aside from the various achievement of Gender Fair Education to transform marginalized women into empowered women, it cannot be separated from the existing obstacles, both at the beginning of its implementation and throughout its process. Among the manifestations of Gender Fair Education is the establishment of women's schools. The initial obstacle that arose was opposition from the society and society leaders regarding the plan to establish women's school. They believed that the establishment of women's schools would give the women the courage to go against their husbands, since the norm in the village perceive women are highly submissive to their husbands. It became harder for program implementers to find students and is a difficult task to overcome because it involves villagers' norms and patriarchal culture (Handayani, 2019).

On top of that, mostly the village officers and religious leaders assume that the principle of gender

equality taught in women's school will elevate their wives to a higher position in the household than their husbands. Therefore, the wives are frightened to attend women's school as it would make them oppose their husbands. Meanwhile, in the concept of gender equality, women are encouraged to be more aware of their rights and their equal standing with men; no one is higher or lower.

The above challenges can be overcome by KPS2K Team through a persuasive approach, by performing home visit for socialization to invite women to participate in the women's school. A different solution was to engage with community leaders and religious leaders. They effectively introduced the concept of gender equality, in which women have the same rights as men, including the right to education, proper health, income and to make their own decisions.

In addition to explaining village officers and religious leaders about the right concept of women's school, the program implementation team also enlisted their participation in the Community Monitoring Team to examine the curriculum used in the women's school and its outcomes. The women's school was ultimately authorized to be established after the approach and socialization (Hasanah, 2019).

Another obstacle faced by the team is the cultural aspect of the society itself. Women in these villages feel restricted and hesitant to join women's school as they are permitted to leave the house only with their husbands' consent. This constraint makes gathering students for women's school challenging. However, the women's school eventually gained students through regular approaches and socialization offered in meetings with village officers and leaders.

Due to the strict patriarchal tradition, it's also difficult for the women to attend women's school consistently. It is become another issue as women must obtain permission from their husband and occasionally, their husband refuse to give the permission, thus some women are no longer able to attend the school. Economic issues also have a role in the inconsistency of women's attendance at women's schools. Economic factor also contribute to the inconsistency of women in attending the school. Considering that most of the society is in poverty condition, the initial intention to attend the school was likely to be money-oriented. However, after going through teaching materials that introduced the importance of a woman's rights and respecting others, most of the women finally attended out of self-will and the intention to develop their own self-quality (Hasanah, 2019).

The lack of instructors or teachers in the teaching process is also one of the obstacles faced in establishing the women's school. It is important to note that teachers for women's school must have certain criteria. They must understand the gender insight and gender perspective as the material taught are dealing with gender equality—mutual respect for the rights possessed by men and women, rather than later becoming gender biased, as if women are trying to outperform men. The limited number of instructors in the women's school also caused some teaching materials to be left undelivered.

The society's inconsistency has caused the assistance provided by Gresik regency government not being appropriately utilized as well. As quoted from the statement of Head of Village Community Empowerment Agency that, "We have provided training, tried to empower them, but it was only temporary because the

villagers preferred to earn a living rather than attend the trainings and socialization provided. The training provided is also underutilized due to the lack of human resources." (Vernanda, 2015).

As previously explained, poverty factor in the society resulted on their low interest to participate in training program, hence they prefer to look for jobs that can provided money to them to fulfill their basic needs. This, absolutely, requires new innovations from the government in empowering the society. It is not merely women who are expected to grow, but men must also be able to improve their quality to achieve the positive impact of gender equality that lead to sustainable development.

Apart from aforementioned obstacles, there are still some village officers who are not fully supported the establishment of women's school, particularly in expansion area (Ambarwati, 2019). In other words, in several expansion area of research, there are village officers who are against the counter-feminization of poverty movement program through gender equality education. This may occur as these officers or leaders do not understand the scheme and benefits of Gender Fair Education yet. Various approach strategies continue to be implemented by the government in order to provide an understanding of the importance of Gender Fair Education as a counter-feminization of poverty movement in the form of women's schools.

### C. Conclusion

Gender Fair Education is designed as a movement to counter the feminization of poverty through the Gender Watch program, which seeks to empower women through the establishment of women's schools with materials dealing with gender equality education, and is taken place in Gresik regency kelompok Perempuan dan Sumber-Sumber Kehidupan (KPS2K) organization with the support of Aus-Aid, Institute for Women's Alternative Education (KAPAL Perempuan) and Gresik regency government. KPS2K also leverages the power of local communities to perform a movement against women's poverty through Gender Fair Education. Gender Fair Education was implemented by establishing women's school. This initiative began in two villages of Wringinanom sub-district (Kesamben Kulon and Mondoluku), Gresik regency. It was then expanded to include two other villages in the same sub-district, i.e. Sumber Gede and Sooko. The concept is currently being replicated in fifteen (15) villages in Gresik regency. The women's school as a medium for implementing the counter-feminization of poverty movement through Gender Fair Education is a non-formal alternative school that is normally held at the local villages' hall.

The government of Gresik regency, which sponsored a number of initiatives, provided some supports for counterfeminization of poverty through gender fair education. The willingness of the government to sign MoU of Gender Watch program is one of the remarkable supports. The government also included funding allocations for the establishment of women's schools in other villages of Gresik regency. At the same time, there are some challenges faced in the implementation of women's school. These obstacles include poverty condition of the society, which causes individuals to be money-oriented participating in this program. In some expansion areas or villages where the program is being replicated, village officers continue to reject the idea of establishing women's school. Therefore, it takes intense persuasive strategy to offer awareness and understanding of Gender Fair Education as a counter-feminization of poverty method.

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