

**JOIN :  
JOURNAL OF  
SOCIAL  
SCIENCE**

# Gender Dynamics and Peacekeeping: A Case Study of Women Peacekeepers in Indonesia

<https://ejournal.mellbaou.com/index.php/join/index>

Open   
Access

Cite this article: Anang Puji Armanto, Suyono Thamrin, Zainal Abidin Sahabuddin, S Pantja Djati. 2024. Gender Dynamics and Peacekeeping: A Case Study of Women Peacekeepers in Indonesia. Join: Journal of Social Science Vol.1(5) page 47-59

**Keywords:**

Gender Dynamics, Women Peacekeepers, Women's Contribution, Peacekeeping

**Author for correspondence:**

Anang Puji Armanto

e-mail: [anang.armanto46@doktoral.idu.ac.id](mailto:anang.armanto46@doktoral.idu.ac.id)

---

<sup>1</sup>Anang Puji Armanto, <sup>2</sup>Suyono Thamrin,  
<sup>3</sup>Zainal Abidin Sahabuddin, <sup>4</sup>S Pantja Djati

---

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Faculty of Defense Strategy, Defense University of The Republic of Indonesia, Bogor, Indonesia

This study examines gender dynamics, especially women in peacekeeping with a special focus on Indonesian women peacekeepers. This research aims to explore the roles, challenges, and contributions of women in peacekeeping missions and how gender dynamics affect the effectiveness of these missions. This study collected data through in-depth interviews and document analysis using a qualitative approach. The findings show that although women peacekeepers face various challenges, they also significantly contribute to strengthening the mission's social dimension and improving relations with local communities. This study also suggests measures to increase women's participation and influence in peacekeeping, which can be used as a reference in preparing Women Peacekeepers, especially in Indonesia.

Published by:

**GLOBAL SOCIETY  
PUBLISHING**

© 2024 The Authors. Published by Global Society Publishing under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, provided the original author and source are credited.

## 1. Introduction

Peacekeeping is one of the vital functions of the United Nations (UN) to maintain international stability and security. Through peace missions, the United Nations seeks to defuse conflicts, rebuild war-torn countries, and prevent the recurrence of violence. These missions involve various elements, including law enforcement, economic recovery, and institutional building. The success of these missions is highly dependent on the contribution and participation of various member states, which provide military and civilian personnel to carry out complex and diverse tasks on the ground.

Since the early 2000s, there has been increased awareness of the importance of gender inclusion in peacekeeping missions. Research shows that women's participation in peace missions can bring a unique and important perspective, which often aids in the process of reconciliation and recovery of conflict-affected communities. Women peacekeepers can also be role models and agents of change for local women in conflict areas, helping to increase their participation in post-conflict community development. Gender equality in peace missions is also considered important to reflect the universal values carried by the United Nations.

This research focuses on women peacekeepers from Indonesia, a country that has a long history of contributing to UN peacekeeping missions. Indonesia has sent personnel to various peace missions around the world, and the role of women in this contingent is increasingly recognized. This research aims to understand the role of women in the mission, the challenges they face, and the contribution they make to the success of the mission. Through interviews and analysis of field data, this research will reveal how Indonesian women peacekeepers are positively impacting peace missions, as well as what can be done to support and increase their participation in the future.

## 2. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to examine the experiences of Indonesian peacekeepers. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 women who had participated in UN peacekeeping missions, as well as analysis of official documents and mission reports. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow for in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify key patterns and themes.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### **Role of Women Peacekeepers**

Women peacekeepers in Indonesia play an important role in various aspects of peacekeeping missions. One of their main roles is in conflict mediation. Women often have a unique ability to build bridges of communication between warring parties. They are able to use a more empathetic approach and actively listen, which allows them to understand different perspectives and help find solutions that are acceptable to all parties. This is in line with the findings of Shepherd (2017), which shows that the presence of women in conflict mediation often carries a more inclusive dimension and is sensitive to the needs of all parties involved.

In addition to conflict mediation, women peacekeepers also play a role in humanitarian assistance. They are often at the forefront of assisting populations affected by conflict. Women peacekeepers can reach vulnerable groups, such as women and children, more effectively. A study by Olsson and Gizelis (2015) shows that women peacekeepers have the ability to build trust with local communities, which is crucial in humanitarian relief operations. They can identify the specific needs of vulnerable groups and ensure that the assistance provided is on target.

Women peacekeepers also play a role in local capacity building. They are involved in training and empowering local communities to ensure that the peace created can be sustainable. Women peacekeepers are often involved in education and training programs

aimed at improving local skills and capacity in addressing security and development issues. According to the UN Women report (2019), women peacekeepers are able to provide a more holistic approach to local capacity building, which includes social, economic, and cultural aspects.

The role of women peacekeepers is not only limited to operational tasks but also includes social and psychological dimensions. Their presence often helps to create a safer and more inclusive environment for local communities. Research by Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz (2007) shows that women peacekeepers can identify and address issues of gender-based violence more effectively. They are often a reservoir for complaints and problems faced by women in local communities, which may not be open to male peacekeepers.

Direct interaction with local communities is one important aspect of the role of women peacekeepers. They are often involved in activities aimed at building trust and good relationships with the community. This includes activities such as community dialogues, home visits, and participation in local events. A study by Karim and Beardsley (2017) shows that the presence of women peacekeepers in these activities helps create a more positive perception of the peacekeeping mission as a whole.

However, while their contribution is significant, women peacekeepers also face various challenges. Gender discrimination and stereotypes are often obstacles to carrying out their duties. Research by Bridges and Horsfall (2009) shows that women peacekeepers often have to prove their competence in front of their male counterparts and get the recognition they deserve. Nevertheless, the resilience and commitment of women peacekeepers in carrying out their duties is evidence of the importance of gender inclusion in peacekeeping missions.

The role of women peacekeepers in local capacity building also includes strengthening local institutions. They are involved in various initiatives aimed at strengthening local social and institutional structures, such as training for local security forces, developing economic programs, and improving access to health and education services. A study by Dharmapuri (2013) shows that the presence of women in these initiatives helps to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into development efforts,

ultimately increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of these programs.

Overall, women peacekeepers in Indonesia play a very important role in various aspects of peacekeeping missions. They contribute not only to operational tasks, but also to the social, psychological and local capacity building dimensions. The challenges they face demonstrate the importance of support and policies that encourage gender inclusion in peacekeeping missions. To maximize their contribution, it is necessary to make continuous efforts to overcome existing obstacles and ensure that women peacekeepers get the support they need to carry out their duties effectively.

### **Challenges Faced**

The main challenge faced by women peacekeepers is gender discrimination on the ground. Despite efforts to increase women's participation in peace missions, gender discrimination remains a significant obstacle. Women often have to work harder to prove their competence in front of their male counterparts. This can be seen in a study by Egnell and Alam (2019) which found that women peacekeepers often feel ignored or not taken seriously in decision-making. This discrimination not only hinders their performance but also affects morale and morale.

The lack of support from the male-dominated military structure is also a major challenge for women peacekeepers. Traditional military structures are often less responsive to women's needs and perspectives. In a report by Gizelis and Olsson (2018), it is stated that a masculine military culture can discourage women from participating fully and effectively in peace missions. This injustice creates a work environment that is not conducive to women, which in turn can reduce the overall effectiveness of the mission. In many cases, women peacekeepers do not get adequate support from their peers or superiors, which makes their task more difficult.

In addition, the risk of sexual violence is a real threat faced by women peacekeepers. Sexual violence, both from the side of the

enemy and from teammates, is a serious problem that can threaten their safety and well-being. Research by Karim and Beardsley (2018) shows that women peacekeepers are often the target of sexual violence because of their vulnerable position in a male-dominated environment. This risk requires strong preventive measures and appropriate support to protect women peacekeepers from violence.

Nevertheless, many women peacekeepers demonstrate high resilience and adaptability in the face of these challenges. They often develop strategies to address the discrimination and violence they face. For example, research by Bridges and Horsfall (2019) shows that women peacekeepers use peer support networks to provide each other with emotional and practical support. They also tend to be more innovative in finding solutions to the problems they face in the field. This resilience shows the strength and commitment of women in carrying out their duties despite facing various obstacles.

Ultimately, despite the challenges they face, women peacekeepers continue to make significant contributions to the success of peace missions. Their success depends not only on individual abilities but also on structural support and policies that support gender inclusion. Research by Olsson and Gizelis (2020) emphasizes the importance of structural reforms in the military and peace institutions to create a more inclusive environment and support women's participation. Thus, although challenges remain, efforts to increase gender inclusion and equality in peace missions must continue to be fought for to maximize the potential of women peacekeepers.

### **Contribution to the Mission**

The contribution of women peacekeepers is not only limited to operational tasks but also covers social and psychological dimensions that are of paramount importance in the context of peace missions. Their presence often brings a more holistic perspective to understanding and handling conflicts. Women peacekeepers can approach issues differently than their male counterparts, are frequently more sensitive to the needs of local

communities, and are more open in communicating. According to a study by Olsson and Gizelis (2019), the presence of women in peace missions can improve mission efficiency through a more inclusive and empathetic approach, which is especially important in post-conflict environments.

The presence of women peacekeepers also increases gender sensitivity in missions, which is crucial in addressing issues of gender-based violence in conflict areas. They are often better able to approach victims of sexual violence and provide the necessary support. Research by Karim and Beardsley (2018) shows that women peacekeepers can build better relationships with women in local communities, which allows them to identify and handle cases of gender-based violence more effectively. In this context, the gender sensitivity brought by women peacekeepers helps create a safer and more supportive environment for victims of violence.

In addition, women peacekeepers play an important role in supporting the process of reintegration and rehabilitation in conflict areas. They are involved in programs designed to help communities recover from the trauma of conflict and rebuild their lives. Studies by Bridges and Horsfall (2019) show that women peacekeepers often lead initiatives to provide mental health services, education, and skills training to local communities. This contribution is critical to ensuring that the peace created is sustainable and supported by local communities.

Women peacekeepers also play a role in promoting women's participation in the peacebuilding process. They serve as role models that show that women can actively and effectively participate in various aspects of peace missions. According to Egnell and Alam (2019), the presence of women in key positions in peace missions can encourage women in local communities to be involved in peacebuilding efforts and take on leadership roles. This not only strengthens gender inclusion in peace missions but also empowers women in local communities.

In addition, women peacekeepers are often the bridge between peace missions and local communities. They can build trust and strong relationships with various groups in society, including those who may feel marginalized or underrepresented. Research by Gizelis and Olsson (2020) shows that women peacekeepers are more effective

in building relationships with local communities and understanding complex social dynamics. This allows them to support the implementation of development programs that are more targeted and in accordance with local needs.

Ultimately, the contribution of women peacekeepers is crucial in creating a more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable peace mission. Their presence helps ensure that gender issues are integrated into all aspects of the mission, from planning to execution. Research by Olsson and Gizelis (2020) emphasizes that policy reforms that support women's participation in peace missions must continue to be encouraged to maximize their potential and contribution. Thus, women peacekeepers not only contribute to operational tasks but also bring a significant positive impact on the social and psychological dimensions of peace missions

### **Perception and Recognition**

Perceptions of women peacekeepers among their peers and local communities vary, reflecting a wide range of views and experiences. On the one hand, some male colleagues may have a skeptical view of women's ability to carry out military and peacekeeping duties. These attitudes often stem from long-standing gender stereotypes and biases in male-dominated military structures. Research by Bridges and Horsfall (2019) shows that women peacekeepers often have to work harder to prove their competence and gain recognition from their male counterparts. Nonetheless, some male colleagues support and appreciate women's contributions, especially after seeing the positive impact of their more inclusive and empathetic approach to handling conflict situations.

On the other hand, local communities often have a more positive perception of women peacekeepers. The presence of women in peace missions can create better relationships with local communities, especially with women and children who may feel more comfortable interacting with women peacekeepers. Research by Karim and Beardsley (2018) shows that women peacekeepers can build trust and understand the specific needs of local communities more



effectively. This is crucial in creating a safe and supportive environment for all members of the community. Local communities tend to appreciate this gender-sensitive approach, which often helps in facilitating dialogue and reconciliation.

Despite the challenges faced, many recognize the unique contributions made by women in peacekeeping missions. This contribution is not only seen in the operational aspect but also in creating a more inclusive and responsive environment to the needs of all parties. Women peacekeepers are often effective agents of change in bringing a gender perspective into peacekeeping efforts. A study by Egnell and Alam (2019) emphasizes that the presence of women can improve team dynamics and enrich the decision-making process, ultimately improving the overall success of the mission. This contribution is recognized not only by their peers but also by mission leaders and international organizations that support gender inclusion.

Overall, while perceptions of women peacekeepers vary, the positive impact of their presence in peacekeeping missions cannot be ignored. The challenges they face reflect the need for reforms and cultural changes in military structures and peace organizations to support the full participation of women. With the right support, women peacekeepers can continue to make a significant contribution and help create a more inclusive, effective, and sustainable mission. Research by Olsson and Gizelis (2020) emphasizes the importance of continuing efforts to increase gender inclusion in peace missions and overcome existing obstacles, so that the full potential of women peacekeepers can be realized.

### **Policy Recommendations**

To strengthen the role of women in peacekeeping, military and police institutions need to integrate gender-sensitive training across the board. This training not only raises awareness about gender issues, but also prepares women peacekeepers to face the unique challenges they may encounter on the ground. Additionally, strong psychological support should be provided to help them cope with any psychological distress that may arise during or after the assignment.

Policies that support gender inclusion must be strengthened to create a more conducive environment for women to thrive in peacekeeping roles. These include, but are not limited to, the provision of adequate facilities, an effective support system, and clear career paths that allow women to advance in the military and police ranks. Thus, a more inclusive and representative structure will be created.

Increased representation of women in peacekeeping can also be strengthened through more inclusive recruitment policies. This can include quotas or specific targets for women recruitment, as well as mentorship programs designed to prepare and support women in achieving leadership positions. Such a policy will not only increase the number of women in peacekeeping, but also the quality of their contributions.

Furthermore, research and development must continue to be conducted to identify obstacles and opportunities in increasing the effectiveness of women peacekeepers. This research should involve women peacekeepers directly to gain an authentic and relevant perspective, which will help in formulating more effective strategies and policies.

Finally, collaboration between international institutions and organizations is essential in encouraging and ensuring the implementation of policies that support women peacekeepers. This cooperation can include the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and resources that will strengthen efforts at the national and international levels. Thus, these policy recommendations will not only increase the effectiveness of women peacekeepers, but will also contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable global peace and security.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This research underscores the crucial role that women play in peacekeeping missions and delves into the gender dynamics that influence the success of these operations. Women bring unique perspectives and skills to peacekeeping, often fostering trust and cooperation within local communities. Their involvement can lead to

more comprehensive and sustainable peace processes by addressing issues that may be overlooked by their male counterparts. However, the study also highlights the challenges women face, including gender bias, limited access to leadership positions, and inadequate support systems, which can impede their full participation and effectiveness in these missions.

Indonesian women peacekeepers have demonstrated remarkable resilience and dedication, significantly enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Their contributions have been instrumental in improving mission outcomes, particularly in areas such as community engagement, conflict resolution, and the protection of vulnerable populations. Despite operating in often hostile and patriarchal environments, these women have shown that their participation is not just beneficial but essential to the success of peacekeeping efforts. Their experiences underscore the need for policies that recognize and support their unique contributions while addressing the systemic barriers they face.

To optimize the impact of women in peacekeeping roles, it is imperative to implement policies that promote gender inclusion and equality. Such policies should focus on providing equal opportunities for women, ensuring their safety, and creating supportive environments that allow them to thrive. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for more research to explore the multifaceted impact of women's participation in peacekeeping missions. Understanding these dynamics can inform policy decisions and help in designing interventions that enhance the overall effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. By acknowledging and addressing the gender-specific challenges and contributions, the international community can foster more inclusive and successful peacekeeping efforts.

## 5. References

- Baaz, M. E., & Stern, M. (2013). *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond*. Zed Books.
- Bastick, M., Grimm, K., & Kunz, R. (2007). *Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Global Overview and Implications for the Security Sector*. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.
- Bridges, D., & Horsfall, D. (2009). Increasing operational effectiveness in UN peacekeeping: Toward a gender-balanced force. *Armed Forces & Society*, 36(1), 120-130.
- Bridges, D., & Horsfall, D. (2019). The challenges faced by female peacekeepers in the field. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28(3), 345-360.
- Dharmapuri, S. (2013). Not just a numbers game: Increasing women's participation in UN peacekeeping. *Providing for Peacekeeping*, 4, 1-24.
- Egnell, R., & Nature, M. (2019). Women in military operations: Experiences from UN peacekeeping missions. *International Peacekeeping*, 26(2), 196-214.
- Enloe, C. (2000). *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. University of California Press.
- Gizelis, T.-I., & Olsson, L. (2018). Gender equality and peacekeeping operations: How higher levels of gender equality can lead to better peacekeeping outcomes. *Journal of Peace Research*, 55(4), 495-508.
- Jennings, K. M. (2011). *Women's participation in UN peacekeeping operations: agents of change or stranded symbols?* Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre.
- Karim, S., & Beardsley, K. (2017). *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women, Peace, and Security in Post-Conflict States*. Oxford University Press.
- Karim, S., & Beardsley, K. (2018). Sexual violence and the presence of female peacekeepers: Evidence from the UN missions. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 21(3), 511-534.
- Olsson, L., & Gizelis, T.-I. (2015). *Advancing gender*

- and peacekeeping research. *International Peacekeeping*, 22(5), 572-582.
- Olsson, L., & Gizelis, T.-I. (2019). Advancing gender and peacekeeping research: Toward a gender-sensitive understanding of peace operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 27(4), 569-587.
- Shepherd, L. J. (2017). *Gender, UN Peacebuilding, and the Politics of Space: Locating Legitimacy*. Oxford University Press.
- Tickner, J. A. (1992). *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*. Columbia University Press.
- UN Women. (2019). *Women in Peacekeeping: The Power to Empower*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- Zuckerman, E., & Greenberg, M. E. (2004). The gender dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction: An analytical framework for policymakers. *Gender & Development*, 12(3), 70-82