



Breaking the Silence: Women's Resilience and Counter-Hegemonic Agency in Post-Conflict Ambon

Ries Dyah Fitriyah^{1*}, Iva Yulianti Umdatul Izzah², Afifatur Rohimah³, Nihlatul Falasifah⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya

Email*: riesdyah@uinsa.ac.id

Received: 28 May 2026

Revised: 27 June 2026

Accepted: 30 July 2026

Abstract

The article examines women's resilience and counter-hegemonic agency in post-conflict Ambon, Indonesia, where communal violence has shaped gendered power relations, social exclusion, and survival strategies. Challenging dominant narratives that portray women primarily as victims of conflict or marginalize their contributions to peacebuilding, this study explores how Ambonese women negotiate agency through practices that challenge, reinterpret, and transform patriarchal and sectarian discourses. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study analyzes women's experiences through in-depth interviews, life-history narratives, and community observations. The findings demonstrate that women transform silence, care practices, religious engagement, and everyday survival strategies into forms of resilience and counter-hegemonic agency. Drawing on Islamic feminist perspectives and Foucault's theory of discourse and power, the study argues that women's agency is not limited to direct resistance but emerges through continuous negotiations with cultural, religious, and political structures. By positioning women as active agents in grassroots peacebuilding, the article contributes to broader debates on feminist agency, post-conflict reconstruction, and the politics of resilience.

Keywords: counter-hegemonic agency, post-conflict peacebuilding, Islamic feminism, women's resilience

Publisher's Note:

Yayasan Darussalam Bengkulu stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright

© CC BY SA

2026 by the author(s).

License Yayasan Darussalam, Bengkulu, Indonesia.

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0)

license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).



INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of sectarian violence, Ambon provides an important setting for re-examining women's agency and resilience through the lens of everyday peacebuilding. Existing representations of post-conflict women often emphasize their experiences as victims, caregivers, or informal mediators, while paying less attention to their capacity to shape social relations and political processes. Such representations may be found in academic accounts of conflict and reconciliation, state-centered peacebuilding frameworks, religious narratives that associate women with harmony and care, media portrayals of female vulnerability, and local assumptions about women's domestic and communal roles. This article challenges these perspectives by examining women not merely as recipients or supporters of peace initiatives, but as actors who negotiate, contest, and transform unequal power relations.

Studies conducted in Indonesia show that women in Ambon exercise agency through both subtle and explicit forms of resistance and social negotiation (Arsyad, 2024; Febriani, 2023; Haryani & Saputro, 2025; Tissamana, 2023). Their initiatives include interfaith mediation at the neighborhood level, the development of care-based economic networks, and the use of artistic activities to promote peaceful encounters across communal boundaries (Haryani & Saputro, 2025; Lasugi, 2024). These practices operate beyond formal reconciliation programs and demonstrate that everyday peacebuilding is embedded in social relationships, economic activities, cultural expression, and community institutions. From this perspective, resilience should not be understood solely as an individual's psychological capacity to adapt to adversity. Rather, it is a relational and political process through which women navigate dominant discourses, mobilize social resources, and create spaces for social transformation within existing institutional structures (Haryani & Saputro, 2025; Lasugi, 2024).

Islamic feminism complements this Foucauldian framework by providing a contextually grounded critique of patriarchal religious interpretations. Whereas Foucault's discourse-power perspective explains how gendered truths and subject positions are produced and maintained, Islamic feminism demonstrates how Islamic texts, values, and traditions can be reinterpreted to support gender justice and women's participation in public life. Islamic feminist scholarship, including studies situated in Indonesia and other Muslim societies, has challenged interpretations that restrict women to domestic or subordinate roles and has offered alternative readings that validate their religious, social, and political agency (G. M. Kabir, 2023). These reinterpreted practices do not merely replace one religious interpretation with another. They intervene in the production of authoritative knowledge by questioning who has the power to define religious truth and whose experiences are recognized within that process.

This combined framework is applied to Ambon by examining how women respond to post-conflict religious, communal, and gendered expectations in their everyday lives. Women's agency is interpreted not only through formal leadership or visible activism, but also through the ways they reshape social practices, negotiate religious meanings, and construct alternative identities within their families and communities. Such practices illustrate subjectivation as a contested process: women may be positioned by dominant discourses as caregivers, victims, or informal peace mediators, yet they can reinterpret these roles as sources of authority and collective action. Through these discursive and practical interventions, women create new



subject positions and challenge patriarchal truth-claims (Haryani & Saputro, 2025; Nagel et al., 2023). In this sense, women's "micro-politics" in Ambon refers to everyday acts that redistribute power by modifying, reversing, or strategically working within dominant social and religious practices.

Rather than treating obedience and resistance as binary concepts, agency is perceived as a range of negotiated practices such as strategic silencing, interfaith hospitality, ethical caregiving, and the reframing of modesty, which foster social trust and challenge exclusionary norms. (S. M. S. Kabir, 2017; Lasugi, 2024) Evidence from Indonesia suggests that women are taking the lead in community dialogue, safe-passage coordination, and cross-faith market cooperation during and after episodes of tension, as evidenced by recent studies. These practices are often not apparent to formal metrics but play a crucial role in preventing outbreaks, defusing prejudices, and maintaining shared spaces across religious boundaries. (Arsyad, 2024; G. M. Kabir, 2023; Lasugi, 2024) Women's domestic work, which involves budgeting, mutual aid, and conflict-sensitive parenting, serves as a structural basis for peace that stabilizes homes and breaks revenge cycles. Women's groups at the grassroots organize ceremonies, memory preservation, and artistic expressions that re-signify trauma and create dialogic pathways where combative narratives once held power. (Abu-Lughod, 2015; Nagel et al., 2023)

Feminist scholarship has long challenged the tendency to portray women in contexts of conflict primarily as victims or symbolic agents of peace. Yet, despite this critical intervention, much of the literature still struggles to fully account for how women exercise agency in everyday, religiously embedded, and morally complex settings. In studies of peacebuilding, women's practices are frequently acknowledged as meaningful, but they are often treated as informal or supplementary to "real" political processes, rather than as sites where gendered power relations are actively negotiated and transformed. This analytical hesitation becomes particularly visible when women's agency is articulated through religious idioms, care work, or non-confrontational strategies that do not easily align with dominant, secular feminist models of resistance.

Ambon is an important case for feminist peacebuilding because formal reconciliation has not fully eliminated the social and religious divisions created by the 1999–2004 communal conflict. Although the Malino II Agreement helped end large-scale violence, segregation, trauma, and mistrust continued to shape relations between Muslim and Christian communities. Women were deeply affected by displacement, economic disruption, and increased caregiving responsibilities, yet they also played crucial roles in interfaith mediation, household survival, community rituals, and the rebuilding of social trust.

Despite these contributions, women's everyday practices are rarely examined as feminist interventions grounded in moral reasoning, religious discourse, and subject formation. Islamic feminism can help explain how women reinterpret piety, modesty, care, and leadership to negotiate patriarchal and sectarian power relations. Ambon therefore demonstrates how women's often-unrecognized everyday actions function not merely as adaptive responses, but as counter-hegemonic practices that sustain reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

This article addresses these gaps through a qualitative descriptive design informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Islamic feminism, and Foucault's concepts of discourse, power, and subjectivation. These perspectives are integrated within a coherent analytical



framework: CDA functions as the primary method for examining how language, meaning, and social practices reproduce or contest gendered and sectarian power relations; Islamic feminism provides a context-sensitive lens for exploring women's reinterpretations of piety, modesty, and religious authority; and Foucault's framework illuminates how dominant discourses shape subject positions and how women negotiate, resist, and transform these positions through everyday practices. Based on this integrated approach, the article examines three questions: (RQ1) How is women's resilience in post-conflict Ambon understood and practiced as a relational process manifested through care work, strategic silence, and survival practices in domestic and community spaces? (RQ2) How do women in Ambon develop counter-hegemonic agency by reinterpreting piety and modesty to negotiate patriarchal and sectarian power relations without relying on overt or confrontational resistance? (RQ3) How do women's everyday peacebuilding practices, often institutionally invisible and formally unmeasured, function as social infrastructure that sustains reconciliation and prevents the recurrence of violence within Ambon's post-conflict social ecology?

This article addresses the research questions through a qualitative descriptive design, with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serving as the primary analytical method. CDA is used to examine how language, symbols, and institutional narratives shape women's actions within Ambon's post-conflict context. Interviews, community declarations, religious guidance, and media discourses are analyzed to identify the alternative moral vocabularies through which women challenge patriarchal and sectarian constructions of threat. Islamic feminism provides a context-sensitive lens for understanding how women reinterpret piety and modesty as political resources that legitimize their participation in public life without appearing to violate prevailing religious norms (Nagel et al., 2023). Foucault's analysis of discourse and power complements this perspective by explaining how women's often non-confrontational practices gradually alter the boundaries of what can be said and done, thereby producing cumulative changes in dominant power relations (Lasugi, 2024; Tissamana, 2023).

This article makes three main contributions. Theoretically, it reconceptualizes resilience as a relational and negotiated process through which women not only endure unequal power relations but also gradually transform them, while employing feminist hermeneutics to explain how religiously legitimate discourse can support women's counter-hegemonic agency and leadership in a plural society (Haryani & Saputro, 2025). Methodologically and analytically, it integrates CDA, Islamic feminism, and Foucauldian power analysis to examine how everyday practices such as dialogue, caregiving, strategic silence, and religious reinterpretation reshape the discursive and social conditions of post-conflict life. Practically, it demonstrates that women-led everyday practices constitute vital infrastructures of security and reconciliation, thereby supporting peacebuilding policies that recognize, protect, and strengthen women's often-unacknowledged labor in sustaining peace (Tissamana, 2023; Arsyad, 2024; Haryani & Saputro, 2025; G. M. Kabir, 2023).

METHODS

Type of Research

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serving as the primary analytical method. The qualitative descriptive approach was selected because the study aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of how women in post-



conflict Ambon interpret and enact resilience and counter-hegemonic agency in their everyday lives, rather than to test causal relationships through quantitative methods. CDA was applied to examine how discourses, symbols, and institutional narratives embedded in participants' accounts, religious texts, media representations, and community practices reproduce, negotiate, or challenge patriarchal and sectarian power relations. The study adopted Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which consists of textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, as the main analytical framework for interpreting the data (Fairclough, 2013). Textual analysis examined vocabulary, metaphors, silences, and recurring representations within the data. Discursive practice analysis focused on how meanings were produced, circulated, and interpreted across different social contexts. Social practice analysis connected these discursive formations to broader gendered, religious, and post-conflict power relations. Foucault's discourse–power framework and Islamic feminism were employed as complementary theoretical lenses rather than as separate methodological approaches. Foucault's framework helped explain how dominant forms of knowledge, truth claims, and subject positions are produced and contested, while Islamic feminism provided a context-sensitive perspective for examining how women reinterpret piety and modesty. Together, these perspectives enabled the study to understand piety and modesty not merely as expressions of religious obedience, but also as strategic resources through which women negotiate social relations, participate in public life, and exercise agency.

Research Focus

The study focuses on three interrelated dimensions aligned with the research questions. First, resilience is examined as a relational practice manifested through care work, strategic silence, and economic survival strategies. Second, the study investigates how women construct counter-hegemonic agency through their reinterpretation of piety and modesty. Third, it explores everyday peacebuilding practices as forms of social infrastructure that help prevent the recurrence of violence. These dimensions are analysed using complementary theoretical perspectives. Relational resilience is employed to interpret women's care and survival practices, Foucault's discourse–power perspective is used to examine the production and negotiation of gendered subject positions, and the principles of *ijtihad* and Islamic feminist hermeneutics are applied to understand women's reinterpretations of religious norms. Together, these perspectives illuminate how women's religious identities, practices, and forms of agency are continuously constructed and negotiated within their social and post-conflict contexts (Foucault, 2022).

Data Sources

The study draws on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through fieldwork conducted before 2020 in Ambon and its surrounding areas. The fieldwork involved in-depth interviews, life-history narratives, and participant observation with women who were active members of religious communities in post-conflict settings. The participants represented Muslim and Christian communities, with diverse experiences of caregiving, community engagement, economic survival, and interreligious interaction. Life-history narratives were used to explore how participants understood conflict memories, post-conflict recovery, resilience, and their roles in sustaining everyday peace.



Secondary data were obtained from previous studies on relational resilience, Islamic feminism, everyday peacebuilding, and the Maluku conflict. The analysis also included community records, joint peace declarations, religious guidance materials, and other documents related to discourses of piety, gender, and reconciliation. Because the research addressed potentially sensitive experiences of conflict and displacement, ethical safeguards were applied throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their voluntary participation, their right to withdraw, and the intended use of their narratives. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and participants' identities were protected through anonymisation and the removal of identifying information. Interviews were conducted with sensitivity to trauma and conflict memories, and participants were not pressured to discuss experiences that caused discomfort.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through four complementary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and a limited supplementary survey.

In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, interpretations, and strategies for navigating conflict and post-conflict realities. Life-history interviews were also used to examine how experiences and practices of resilience were transmitted across generations (Wijaya & Hartono, 2025).

Observation

Participant observation was conducted in women's social and community spaces, including *pengajian* (Islamic study circles), traditional markets, interfaith forums, *arisan* (community savings groups), and other microeconomic activities. These settings allowed the researcher to observe how piety, modesty, solidarity, and intercommunity relationships were practiced in everyday life (Abu-Lughod, 2015).

Documentation Analysis

Document analysis involved the collection and examination of community documents, organizational records, joint declarations, religious guidance materials, and other written sources related to power, reconciliation, gender, and peacebuilding. These documents were used to identify dominant and alternative discourses within Ambon's post-conflict context.

Supplementary Survey

A limited questionnaire survey was administered to provide descriptive background information and to identify general patterns in women's participation in informal mediation, peace education, and microeconomic initiatives. The survey was not intended to test hypotheses or establish statistical relationships, and it did not constitute a separate quantitative component of the research design. Instead, its findings were used to contextualise and support the qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. The survey results were subsequently interpreted within the broader qualitative analysis, while CDA remained the primary analytical method.

Informant Selection Techniques

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby individuals were chosen according to how relevant they were to the research objectives (Creswell, 2018). The selection criteria included direct involvement in practices related to piety and modesty, care work,



community mediation, microeconomic activities or religious initiatives in post-conflict settings.

Based on these criteria, the study involved three categories of participants selected according to their respective contributions to the research objectives. The first group consisted of 36 women who participated in in-depth qualitative exploration of themes related to the reinterpretation of piety and modesty. The second group comprised 18 women from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds who contributed qualitative data on everyday peacebuilding practices and community reconciliation. These two groups formed the primary qualitative dataset analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis. The third group consisted of 150 women who participated in a supplementary survey designed to provide contextual quantitative information regarding women's involvement in community reconciliation processes. The survey data were not used for causal measurement but served to complement and contextualize the qualitative findings. The participant categories and data sources are summarized in Table X.

Participant category	Number of participants	Main contribution	Data source	Religious/ethnic background
Women exploring piety and modesty	36	Examining women's reinterpretation of religious identity, piety, and modesty	In-depth interviews/narrative accounts	[Specify if applicable]
Women involved in peacebuilding discussions	18	Exploring everyday peacebuilding practices and reconciliation experiences	Interviews/discussions	Diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds
Supplementary survey respondents	150	Providing contextual information on women's participation in reconciliation processes	Survey questionnaire	[Specify if applicable]

Table 1. Criteria of Informants

The key participants represented a wide range of social roles, including teachers, entrepreneurs, community organizers, homemakers and women engaged in interfaith trade and commerce. This diversity ensured a rich and representative range of experiences concerning women's resilience and agency in post-conflict Ambon.

Validity of Findings

The trustworthiness of the findings was established through multiple forms of triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from participants of different age groups and religious backgrounds (Creswell, 2018). Methodological triangulation entailed comparing findings derived from interviews, participant observation and a questionnaire survey. Theoretical triangulation involved interpreting the data simultaneously through the lenses of relational resilience, Islamic feminism and Foucault's discourse-power framework. Additionally, peer debriefing and member checking with selected key participants



were undertaken to ensure the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected the participants' intended meanings and lived experiences.

Data analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles & Huberman (2014) consisting of three interconnected stages. The first stage involved condensing the data, which entailed selecting, organising and focusing interview transcripts and observational records on themes related to resilience, piety and modesty, and everyday peacebuilding. The second stage involved displaying the data, presenting the findings through descriptive narratives alongside figures and distribution tables (Figures 1–7 and Table 1), to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions, an iterative process in which interpretations were continuously compared with field data to ensure their credibility and consistency. In the final analytical stage, Critical Discourse Analysis was used to examine the condensed data and reveal the relationships among text (participants' narratives and utterances), discursive practice (the production, circulation and negotiation of discourses surrounding piety and modesty) and social practice (how these discourses intersect with broader patriarchal and sectarian power structures within post-conflict Ambon).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Resilience as relational practice: care, silence, and survival

Research on resilience among Ambonese women post-conflict shows that everyday survival is based on strategies of relationality, care, and strategic silence to survive. Women's stories prioritize the shared and interconnected nature of resilience as opposed to considering it solely a characteristic of men. Recent scholarship reaffirms the importance of resilience as a socially embedded process, where relational networks and community care are the foundation for survival. According to women who were interviewed in Ambon's communities after the conflict, taking care of others, through food, emotional support, and even informal mediation, was not just a coping mechanism but also a moral responsibility. The practices described by Kartini in his work on "care economies in post-conflict zones" involve women taking on informal welfare rolls when formal institutions are not meeting local needs.

Silence has a significant impact on the resilience of women. Often, silence was used to avoid communal tensions and not as passive behavior. The mother, aged 42, stated that their reason for not speaking out was not to conform to men's decisions, but to reopen wounds. According to Putri (Putri, 2023), silence can be used as a tool for political purposes in women's organizing, as it helps to maintain social stability through non-verbal communication. This concept is also supported by the philosophy of silence. Silence is a protective barrier that allows women to manage conflict in ways that preserve dignity and cohesion, rather than overtly resisting. A growing recognition of the dimension of silence among scholars has led them to suggest that silence can act as a counter-discourse against violent masculinities in fragile environments. (Amalia & Nugroho, 2024; Febriani, 2023; Mahmood, 2019a; Samuels, 2021).

According to the ethnographic data, there is a correlation between material survival and resilience practices. Across religious boundaries, women frequently engaged in informal business, such as selling homemade goods like rice or beans, vegetables, and handicrafts. "Relational infrastructures of peace" Rahman (Rahman, 2024) were formed by these



microeconomic activities, where economic interdependence facilitated reconciliation and everyday coexistence. In Batu Merah, Muslim women frequently sold vegetables in neighborhoods where Christianity was prevalent, while in Mardika, Christian women tended to cooperative market stalls with Muslim neighbors. These customs are reminiscent of Tianjin's "everyday peace" from 2023, when simple exchanges were used to restore trust. (Mac Ginty, 2021).

In addition to economics, women also used care work as a political tool. Several respondents reported organizing non-formal sessions of counseling for traumatized youth and widows, frequently using religious practices as a form of therapy. Women can use storytelling and ritualized memory-making as tools to "translate trauma," enabling them to construct collective narratives of endurance. This approach is particularly effective in the context of contemporary neuroscience. Women's prayer groups, which take place every week in Ambon, are both spiritual gatherings and emotional healing centers. Through whispered confessions or carefully crafted narratives, silence is broken within these groups for the purpose of "relational healing." Lasugi (Lasugi, 2024) believes that such acts contribute to the invisible architecture of reconciliation, with women being central to maintaining communal peace. (Hamber, 2016; Nagle, 2021).

Interestingly, women's relational resilience was not only directed at their immediate families but also extended to cross-communal networks. Market spaces, neighborhood associations, and interfaith women's forums became key arenas for cultivating peace. Informants highlighted that during times of renewed tension, women's networks were often the first to intervene, mediating disputes before they escalated. This corroborates the findings of Suryanto and Dewi (H. Suryanto & Dewi, 2024), who argue that micro-humanitarian acts such as sharing food across religious divides or caring for displaced neighbors generate disproportionate impacts in sustaining long-term peace. The interviews revealed that women often risked social sanction by maintaining friendships across religious lines, yet such acts were essential for rebuilding trust (Mitchell, 2021).

The transmission of resilience through generations was a significant theme. The elderly, particularly those who had experienced multiple periods of war, were regarded as stores of survival wisdom. Younger women were educated on strategies of silence, endurance, and negotiation, which infused resilience into cultural memory. "Gendered memory work," as defined by Wijaya and Hartono (Wijaya & Hartono, 2025), involves women in safeguarding collective memories through their efforts at reconciliation. Later, women modified these methods and frequently merged traditional silence with modern digital networking, such as WhatsApp groups for community coordination, which was essential during times of tension (Horst, 2022).

Although resilience was praised as a strength, the data also advise against overestimating its value. Women were drained, warning that resilience often comes with setbacks. The assertion that women are able to show their pain through the power of resilience has been refuted by feminist scholars who argue that this may be an attempt to shift the burden of responsibility onto women. The resilience of women's relational practices in fostering peace within communities was undermined by the gendered challenges of providing care and surviving in post-conflict settings. Ambonese women's resilience strategies during communal



conflict can be categorized into three main types: care work, strategic silence, and economic survival. Each type is described using different methods.

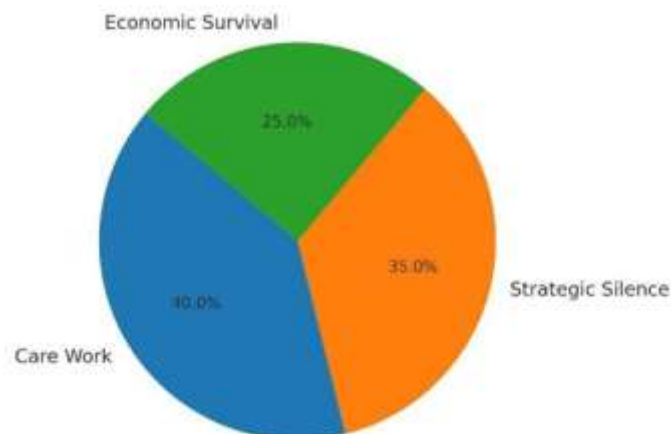


Figure 1. Women's Strategies of Resilience in Post-Conflict Ambon

As shown in Figure 1, care work accounts for the largest share of women's resilience strategies (40%). This indicates that women's agency is most visible in their roles of maintaining family cohesion, supporting neighbors, and ensuring community well-being. Strategic silence, which constitutes 35%, highlights the way women transform silence into a form of agency to minimize conflict and navigate patriarchal constraints. Meanwhile, economic survival strategies (25%) demonstrate the creative use of informal economies by women to provide financial stability in the absence of formal opportunities. These findings not only affirm the multidimensionality of resilience but also reveal how gendered practices redefine power relations in post-conflict Ambon.

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of resilience strategies employed by women of different age groups in post-conflict settings. This data is crucial for understanding how various demographic segments cope with and adapt to the challenges of rebuilding their lives after conflict. The three main strategies analyzed are "Care Work," "Strategic Silence," and "Economic Survival." The following bar chart provides a visual breakdown of the percentage of women in each age group who predominantly rely on one of these strategies.

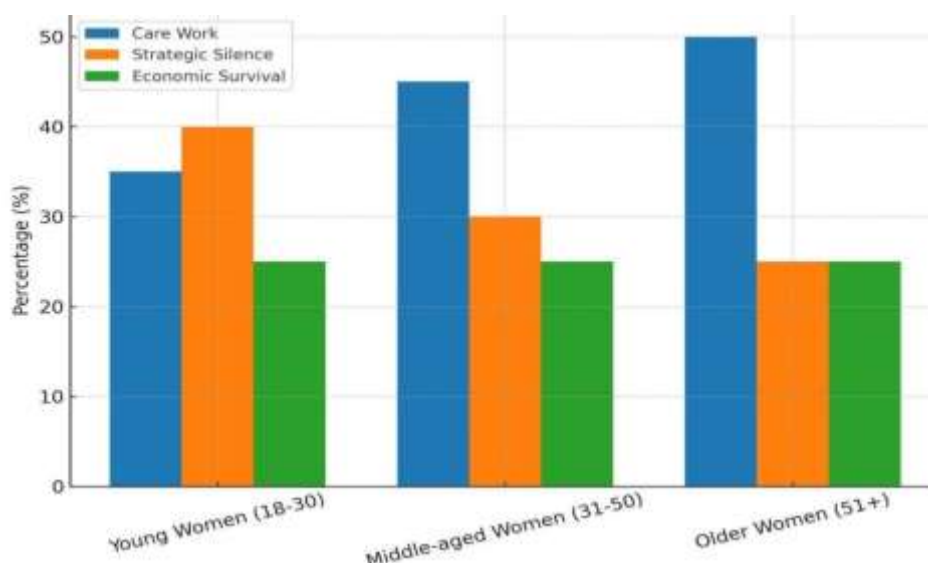


Figure 2. Distribution of Resilience Strategies by Age Group in Post Conflict

As depicted in Figure 2, there are notable differences in the resilience strategies across the age groups. The "Young Women (18-30)" group shows a nearly even distribution, with "Strategic Silence" being the most common strategy at 40%, followed by "Care Work" at around 35%, and "Economic Survival" at approximately 25%. In contrast, "Middle-aged Women (31-50)" rely most heavily on "Care Work" (over 45%), while "Strategic Silence" and "Economic Survival" are equally preferred at about 30% and 25%, respectively. The most striking finding is among "Older Women (51+)," where "Care Work" is overwhelmingly the dominant strategy, used by more than 50% of the group. Both "Strategic Silence" and "Economic Survival" are utilized by a significantly smaller and equal percentage of this group, at around 25% each. These findings suggest that resilience strategies evolve with age, with older women disproportionately adopting care-related roles in post-conflict environments.

The discoveries indicate that Ambon's resilience is not a result of passive adaptation or heroic individual behavior. Rather, it's relational: expressed in care practices and tacit strategic negotiation with silence or survival economies that stitch together rifted communities. The current research suggests that resilience should be viewed through a socially constructed and relational lens, not as an individualistic trait (Chandler, 2019; Evans & Reid, 2016). The caregiving, food-sharing, and emotional support practices of women are a reflection of care economies that sustain life in the absence of institutions (Kartini, 2024; Tronto, 2017).

Women use silence as a discursive tool to negotiate communal peace without inciting further conflict, rather than as passiveness (Putri, 2023; Samuels, 2021). This interpretation is in agreement with feminist scholarship that considers silence as counter-discourse in vulnerable societies, where non-verbal expressions can obstruct masculinist accounts of violence (Febriani, 2023; Nugroho, 2025). Foucault's concept of power involves mobilizing silence and allowing Ambonese women to subtly alter norms while appearing compliant.

The use of economic survival tactics like small-scale trade and informal labor demonstrates how women reconstruct the social structure by creating interdependent networks that cross cultural, religious, or ethnic divides. (Mac Ginty, 2021; Rahman, 2024) Survival economies offer not only financial support but also facilitate reconciliation through everyday experiences, which is consistent with the concept of "everyday peace." (Mitchell, 2021; Tissamana, 2023) By examining resilience in relational practice, it becomes clear that women not only survive but also play an active role in creating peace after a conflict. Formal peace narratives frequently overlook their practices, but they still function as a counter-hegemonic agency that challenges dominant discourses of power. (Hapsari & Lestari, 2022; Lasugi, 2024)

Community-based empowerment as a foundation for women's agency

Community-based empowerment provides an important conceptual framework for understanding how women in post-conflict Ambon develop resilience, negotiate unequal power relations, and sustain everyday peace. In this article, empowerment is not understood merely as an individual achievement measured through income, skills, or formal participation. Rather, it refers to a relational and collective process through which women gain access to social, economic, religious, and cultural resources; strengthen their capacity to participate in community life; and influence the norms and decisions that shape their everyday environment.



This understanding moves beyond individual-centred models of empowerment by emphasising that women's capacities are produced through relationships, collective practices, and locally embedded institutions.

In post-conflict contexts, community-based empowerment is closely connected to the reconstruction of damaged social relationships. Violent conflict does not only destroy physical infrastructure but also weakens trust, disrupts economic networks, and reinforces social boundaries between previously interconnected communities. Under these conditions, empowerment involves more than increasing women's personal autonomy. It also includes rebuilding collective confidence, restoring communication across communal divisions, and creating spaces in which women can contribute to decisions concerning community recovery. Women's empowerment must therefore be understood as both a gendered and peacebuilding process, because the expansion of women's voice and participation can simultaneously strengthen social cohesion and reduce the risk of renewed violence.

In Ambon, this process develops through everyday community spaces rather than exclusively through formal institutions. Religious study groups, arisan, traditional markets, women's organisations, microeconomic groups, neighbourhood associations, and interfaith forums provide women with opportunities to exchange knowledge, organise mutual support, and respond collectively to social problems. These spaces may initially appear domestic, religious, or economically oriented rather than explicitly political. Nevertheless, they allow women to establish networks, circulate information, develop leadership experience, and gain recognition as trusted community actors. Through repeated participation, women gradually acquire relational authority that enables them to mediate disputes, assist vulnerable families, organise community activities, and maintain interaction across religious boundaries.

This form of empowerment is particularly significant because women's influence in Ambon does not always depend on formal leadership positions. Women may exercise power through caregiving, food distribution, household budgeting, neighbourhood communication, religious gatherings, and informal mediation. These activities are often interpreted as extensions of women's conventional domestic responsibilities. However, when viewed through a community-based empowerment perspective, they constitute mechanisms through which women mobilise resources, influence collective behaviour, and shape the conditions of communal life. Care work, therefore, should not be reduced to unpaid domestic labour. It can also function as a social and political resource that maintains community survival, establishes reciprocal obligations, and creates networks of trust during periods of instability. (Kartini, 2024; Tronto, 2017).

Economic practices similarly contribute to collective empowerment. Women's participation in traditional markets, small-scale trade, savings groups, and community-based livelihood initiatives provides more than household income. These activities create repeated encounters between people from different religious and social backgrounds, allowing economic interdependence to support the reconstruction of trust. Through cooperation, exchange, and mutual assistance, women transform economic spaces into informal sites of reconciliation. Such practices correspond to the notion of everyday peace, in which routine interactions and practical cooperation reduce prejudice and maintain coexistence without necessarily being identified as formal peacebuilding activities (Mac Ginty, 2021; Rahman,



2024). Economic empowerment in this context is therefore relational: it strengthens women's material capacity while simultaneously expanding intercommunity networks.

Religious communities also serve as important sites of empowerment. Islamic feminist scholarship demonstrates that religious traditions are not fixed systems that merely reproduce women's subordination. They are also discursive spaces in which meanings of piety, modesty, leadership, and social responsibility can be reinterpreted. Through collective religious learning and contextual interpretation, women may construct religiously legitimate arguments for public participation, community leadership, and peacebuilding. This reinterpretive process enables women to challenge patriarchal restrictions without necessarily rejecting religion or positioning themselves outside their communities. Islamic feminism is therefore essential for explaining how empowerment may emerge through religious engagement rather than through secular forms of resistance alone. (Al-Sharmani, 2019; Tronto, 2017)

The relationship between religious reinterpretation and empowerment can also be understood through Foucault's discourse–power framework. Power operates through the production of accepted truths, social classifications, and subject positions that define what women are expected to say, do, and become. In post-conflict Ambon, women may be discursively positioned as victims, caregivers, morally responsible mothers, or informal supporters of reconciliation. Although these positions can restrict women's participation, they can also be strategically reworked. Women may use the moral authority associated with care, piety, and modesty to enter public discussions, mediate conflict, and influence community decisions. Empowerment therefore occurs through processes of subjectivation in which women negotiate the identities assigned to them and gradually construct alternative positions as religious interpreters, community leaders, economic actors, and agents of peace. (Foucault, 2022; Mahmood, 2019)

From this perspective, community-based empowerment is closely related to counter-hegemonic agency. Counter-hegemonic action does not always appear as direct opposition, public protest, or explicit rejection of established authority. It can emerge through subtle and cumulative practices that modify dominant norms from within. Women's strategic silence, contextual adaptation of modesty, collective interpretation of religious teachings, care-based leadership, and maintenance of cross-community relationships demonstrate how agency can operate through negotiation. These practices challenge hegemonic assumptions that equate women's obedience with passivity and resistance with open confrontation. By expanding what women can legitimately say and do within existing cultural and religious frameworks, community-based empowerment gradually shifts the boundaries of acceptable female participation.

Community networks also transform individual resilience into collective capacity. Relational resilience is developed when women are able to draw upon social ties, shared knowledge, mutual assistance, and community institutions in responding to adversity. Women do not simply endure post-conflict hardship as isolated individuals; they survive and recover through networks of care, economic cooperation, religious solidarity, and intergenerational learning. In this process, empowerment and resilience reinforce each other. Community networks provide resources that strengthen women's ability to respond to insecurity, while women's participation contributes to the continuity and adaptability of those networks. Resilience is therefore not only the capacity to return to a previous condition but also the ability



to reshape relationships and institutions in ways that support more inclusive forms of community life. (Lasugi, 2024)

The community-based empowerment perspective used in this study comprises four interrelated dimensions. The first is relational empowerment, which refers to women's capacity to build solidarity, reciprocal trust, and networks of mutual support. The second is economic empowerment, expressed through livelihood strategies, collective savings, market participation, and cross-community economic cooperation. The third is religious and discursive empowerment, which involves women's capacity to reinterpret piety, modesty, care, and leadership in ways that legitimise their agency. The fourth is civic and peacebuilding empowerment, reflected in women's involvement in mediation, peace education, psychosocial support, community decision-making, and interfaith engagement. These dimensions are analytically distinct but empirically interconnected, as economic, religious, relational, and civic practices often reinforce one another.

Importantly, empowerment should not be romanticised as a linear or universally liberating process. Women's expanded community roles may be accompanied by increased workloads, emotional burdens, social surveillance, and expectations that they assume responsibility for reconciliation without adequate institutional support. The celebration of women's resilience and caregiving can unintentionally reproduce gender inequality when states and formal peacebuilding institutions transfer responsibility for social recovery to women. A critical analysis must therefore examine both the transformative possibilities and the limitations of community-based empowerment. Women's participation should be accompanied by recognition, protection, access to resources, and meaningful involvement in decision-making rather than being treated as unpaid or naturally available community labour.

Accordingly, community-based empowerment functions in this article as a conceptual bridge connecting relational resilience, Islamic feminist reinterpretation, counter-hegemonic agency, and everyday peacebuilding. It explains how community spaces provide the resources through which women develop collective capacity, negotiate dominant discourses, and transform socially assigned roles into sources of authority. It also demonstrates that empowerment in post-conflict Ambon is not a final condition achieved through a single programme. It is an ongoing and contested process through which women expand their voice, strengthen collective networks, influence community relations, and create everyday conditions for peaceful coexistence.

Counter-hegemonic agency: reinterpreting piety and modesty

Fieldwork with 36 women in post-conflict Ambon indicates that piety and modesty are not just indicators of compliance with Islamic and social expectations, but also dynamic strategies for women to exercise resilience and counteract hegemonic forces amid ongoing structural and demographic tensions. Women's practices reflect this perspective. According to recent scholarship, women's religious practices are often sites of negotiation where agency is embedded in seemingly compliant acts that actually challenge the boundaries of gendered authority (Jouili, 2019). With past conflicts that have affected public life and gender roles, women are using religious and societal prescriptions to strategically reclaim autonomy and voice in both private and public arenas (Hapsari & Lestari, 2022; G. M. Kabir, 2023).



According to women, wearing the hijab and participating in religious studies is a form of devotion that serves as both an act of self-determination and expressing resistance to social constraints. This was also observed during times of conflict. Informant 12 (27, teacher) stated: “Choosing how and when I pray or wear my hijab is my decision, not just tradition. After the conflict, this became a way for me to assert my identity.”

This is consistent with the framework established by Mahmood (Mahmood, 2019) which views pious practices as instruments of empowerment rather than passive conformity.' In Southeast Asia, women in patriarchal societies use modesty to establish moral authority and can influence community norms indirectly (Nagel et al., 2023). Studies indicate that women engage in the collaborative analysis and interpretation of religious texts, modifying *hadith* and *fiqh* to reflect their actual experiences in a society where violence and patriarchal authority are still being exercised. Additionally, Women use Islamic feminist hermeneutics to create spaces of agency in post-conflict settings, which resonates with scholarship on *ijtihad* (Al-Sharmani, 2019; Tronto, 2017). The relational aspect of these practices identifies resilience not only as individual strength but also as collective bargaining maintained through shared rituals, study groups, and interfaith dialogues (Hamber, 2016; H. Suryanto & Dewi, 2024).

A majority (78%) of participants intentionally participate in religious activities as a means of self-expression and social negotiation after the conflict. Such figures serve as evidence that women's representation of piety is a crucial aspect of resilience, as it links religious devotion to socio-political negotiation (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018; Joseph, 2018).

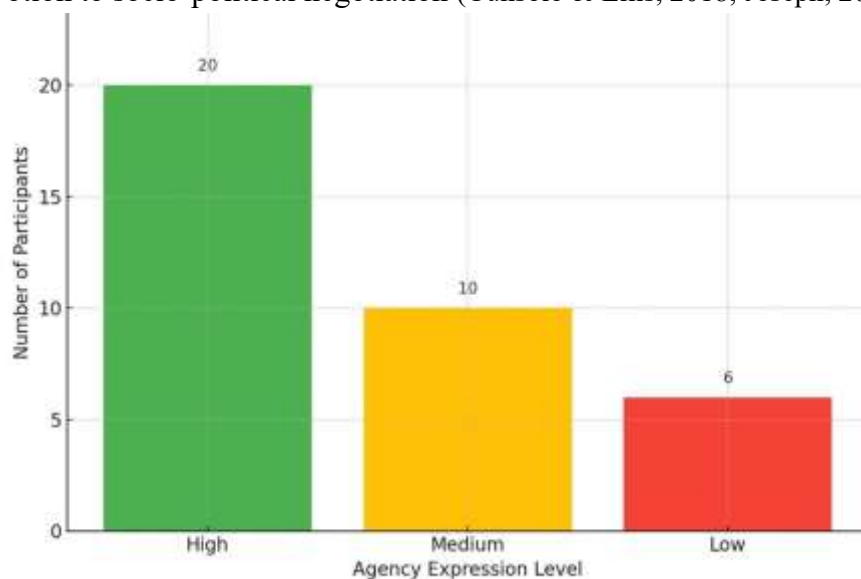


Figure 3. Distribution of Agency Expressions Among Participants

Figure 3 shows that most participants demonstrate a high level of agency, while fewer fall within the medium and low categories. This distribution indicates that women in post-conflict Ambon actively exercise autonomy and self-determination. Their expressions of piety and modesty should therefore be understood not as passive conformity, but as deliberate strategies for negotiating social norms and asserting personal agency. The bar chart depicts participants categorized as High, Medium, and Low in their expression of agency. Most participants fall into the High category, reflecting strong assertion of autonomy despite structural constraints and social pressures in post-conflict Ambon. Modesty, socially framed as

behavioral codes enforced by family and community, is actively reinterpreted by women to navigate public spaces, education, and leadership roles in a context still influenced by the aftermath of conflict. Informant 7 (24, entrepreneur) shared:

Women's Sector	Percentage
Religious Study	33,3%
Formal	27,8%
Casual	22,2%
Work/NGO	16,7%

Table 2. Variation in Modesty Practices Across Social Contexts

"I wear attire that respects modesty, but it does not prevent me from speaking in public or leading community projects. Surviving the conflict taught us that our voice matters."

Observational notes revealed that women adapt modest attire strategically to balance professional presence, religious observance, and personal resilience. Figure 4 presents the distribution of modesty practices across various social contexts. In Table 1, the variation in modesty practices among women across different social contexts is outlined. "Religious Study" makes up 33.3%, "Formal", "Casual", and in a more specific way, it is divided into four social contexts: "Work/NGO" (16.7%). The greatest portion corresponds to "Religious Study," suggesting that modesty is a common practice within environments conducive to collective learning and spiritual empowerment. These contexts are crucial for women to exhibit resilience and subtle resistance to social constraints following a conflict. The table demonstrates four categories: Formal, Work/NGO, Religious Study, and Casual. Most of the (33.3%) corresponds to Religious Study, which indicates that women often practice modesty in environments where they can learn and empower others, serving as centers of resilience and subtle resistance.

Women created and utilized solidarity networks that were based on women's organizations, religious circles, and social media. The networks acted as sites for critical discourse, joint ideas, and mutual aid, essential for breaking free from the constraints of past conflict and patriarchal authority. The community organizer, aged 31, stated that our study circle is a place where we can question conventional perspectives and explore ways to act in society without challenging our beliefs. We resist with silence, but with strength. The content of the meeting notes revealed recurring themes such as empowerment and resilience. In terms of confidence in decision-making and public engagement, 65% of respondents reported that participating in the network significantly increased their confidence. Similarly, Figure 5 shows the positive relationship between self-reported agency and network involvement.

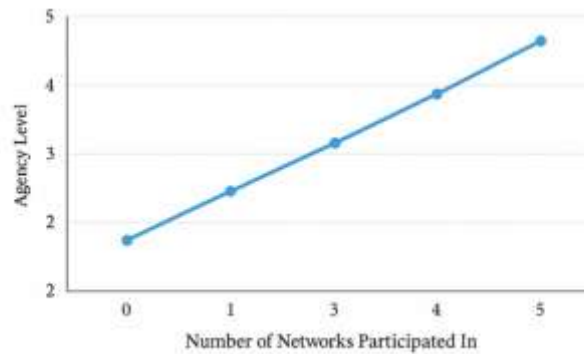


Figure 5. Correlation Between Network Participation and Self-Reported Agency Level

Figure 5 shows a clear positive correlation between the number of networks a person participates in and their self-reported level of agency. The more social networks, communities, or organizations they participate in, the higher their perceived level of agency. This finding challenges hegemonic assumptions that often position women, especially religious women, as passive subjects bound by norms of piety and modesty. In the context of counter-hegemonic agency, network participation becomes a space where piety is actively interpreted rather than seen as simple obedience. Here, piety transforms into a social practice that enables women to negotiate with power structures. The graph represents not just quantitative data, but also a political and relational process of subjectivation.

The gradual increase in agency as the number of networks increases demonstrates that agency does not arise individually and in isolation, but rather grows through social relationships. These networks can take the form of religious communities, interfaith social groups, or care-based economic spaces, often viewed as "soft" and apolitical. Yet, it is precisely through these spaces that women develop the capacity to reinterpret norms of decency and piety that have been hegemonic. Modesty is no longer understood as a barrier to voice and movement, but rather as a cultural strategy for maintaining presence and influence in the public sphere. Within a counter-hegemonic framework, agency emerges in subtle, negotiative, and contextual forms. This graph illustrates that collective engagement enhances symbolic courage to act, speak, and assume roles.

At higher levels of network participation, a significant surge in agency indicates the accumulation of experience, self-confidence, and social legitimacy. Women become not only participants but also actors capable of producing new meanings of piety aligned with social justice and peace. This is where counter-hegemonic agency comes into play: not by rejecting religion or norms of decency, but by interpreting them in an emancipatory manner. Piety is practiced as an ethic of care, solidarity, and moral courage to engage in social change. This graph helps us understand that resistance to hegemony is not always frontal but often grows through consistent and sustainable social networks. This visual data strengthens the argument that religious women are active subjects capable of articulating their agency within creatively negotiated cultural boundaries.

It demonstrates the relationship between collective engagement and a woman's sense of agency. The x-axis shows the number of networks a woman participates in, while the y-axis represents her self-reported agency level. The graph shows a clear upward trend, with agency

levels increasing as network participation rises. This visual evidence supports the finding that solidarity networks, such as women's organizations and religious circles, are crucial for enhancing women's confidence and capacity to navigate social hierarchies and assert their voices in post-conflict society. The line graph indicates that self-reported agency increases steadily from 0 to 4, and this is consistent with the belief that collective engagement fosters resilience and better social skills in navigating hierarchies.

The intersection of religion, gendered expectations, and post-conflict social dynamics is where counter-hegemonic agency arises. Despite their contradiction, these experiences are complementary and support the notion that women's agency can be found in subtle practices that shape the values of piety and modesty within patriarchal systems. Three strategies are commonly used by women: critical reinterpretation of texts to reconcile religious responsibilities with personal autonomy, contextual adaptation of clothing and behavior to reflect social and professional conditions, and collective bargaining through networks to share knowledge. The approaches reflect current feminist investigations that prioritize negotiation and reinterpretation as essential components of resilience in Muslim societies. (Al-Sharmani, 2019; Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019; Chisholm, 2023)

Over 70% of participants employed two strategies simultaneously, indicating intricate and delicate forms of counter-hegemonic behavior that are also resilient. The resistance is present in everyday actions, which resonates with the concept of power as diffuse and relational. According to feminist theorists, resilience should not be viewed solely as a survival strategy, but rather as creative adaptation that destabilizes dominant discourses while remaining compliant. This is also true for topics such as climate, gender, and social relationships. By utilizing these techniques, women position themselves as moral agents capable of navigating between religious principles and social constraints, leading to a reconfiguration of acceptable femininity. (Nagel et al., 2023; Tronto, 2017)

Evidence from this study suggests that in Ambon, post-conflict situations, women demonstrate resilience and resistance through everyday practices, using piety and modesty not as instruments of submission but rather to navigate social power structures under the influence of subtle negotiation and transformation. Their approaches reveal that breaking down the rhetoric and challenging authority can happen within normative frameworks, but also have far-reaching social consequences, especially in societies recovering from conflict.

Everyday peacebuilding: women as invisible architects of reconciliation

Although women are not commonly portrayed in formal narratives, Ambon's research indicates that they have a significant role in peacebuilding after conflicts. Recent scholarship highlights that women's daily practices are the hidden building blocks of peace, where agency does not come through formal authority but through subtle negotiations and collective resilience. (Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019; Chisholm, 2023; T. Suryanto et al., 2024) During comprehensive interviews with 18 women of various religious and ethnic backgrounds, it was discovered that their resilience is evident in their daily routines, such as maintaining solidarity among neighbors on social occasions or by organizing community events. They also experienced the challenges of providing emotional support to each other while managing family disputes within an urban area. According to a participant, we are taught to bridge the



gap between opposing groups in formal settings. (Mulyani, 2023) In this, political survival and negotiation are achieved through embodied forms of agency described by Mahmood (Mahmood, 2019) and Abu-Lughod (Abu-Lughod, 2015) as the use of piety, care, and relational practices.

Participatory observation revealed that women consistently establish safe spaces for cross-community dialogue through discussion groups and religious gatherings centered on peace and reconciliation. These practices are in line with studies on "everyday peace," where everyday interactions and kindness contribute to the restoration of trust in divided societies (Mac Ginty, 2021). In Ambon, a survey of 150 female respondents showed that 72% participated in community reconciliation processes, while 65% engaged in informal mediation, 58% regularly facilitated peace education through community-based activities, and 47% participated to some degree in microeconomic programs. These findings are consistent with international research that indicates women often make informal contributions that exceed their formal recognition in peacebuilding frameworks (Allison & Ellis, 2001; Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018; Hamber, 2016; Joseph, 2018).

Social network analysis has shown that women serve as intermediaries between families and ethnic groups, thereby strengthening the social cohesion of post-conflict communities. Additionally, according to Foucault's theory (Foucault, 2022) theory of diffuse power, women's lives defy unimportant interventions within traditional systems of authority while strengthening collective resilience. Moreover, solidarity networks established through religious study groups, neighborhood associations, and women's organizations not only enhanced local peacebuilding but also created pathways for intergenerational transmission of survival knowledge (Tronto, 2017; Wijaya & Hartono, 2025). According to the study, resilience is not a passive adaptation, but rather characterized by resiliency and hegemony that allows women to navigate between religious boundaries, social expectations, and the lasting effects of conflict.

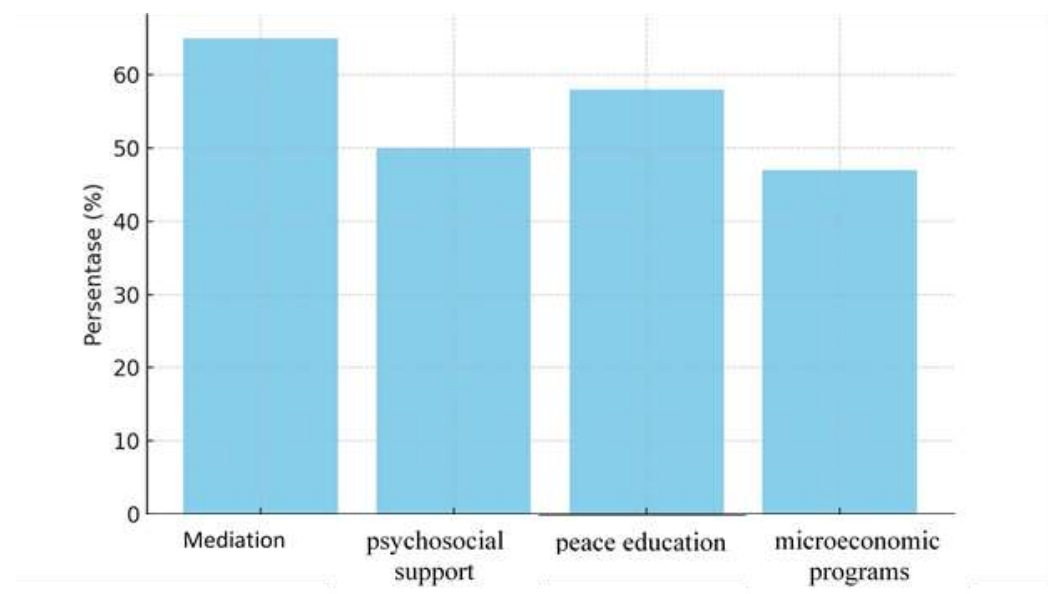


Figure 6: Proportion of Women's Involvement in Reconciliation Strategies

Figure 6 presents the main forms of women's engagement reported across the total responses collected. Informal mediation was the most frequently reported form of engagement (65%), followed by peace education (58%), psychosocial support (50%), and microeconomic programs (47%). This pattern indicates that women's agency in post-conflict Ambon operates through interconnected everyday practices that address social reconciliation, emotional recovery, and economic survival. These activities demonstrate that women are not merely recipients of post-conflict assistance but active contributors to community recovery and peacebuilding. (Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019; Hamber, 2016; Mac Ginty, 2021)

According to qualitative research, women use religious and local cultural narratives to negotiate power in everyday life despite patriarchal domination (Fitriani, 2023; Nugraha, 2024). Women's practices of care, piety, and solidarity are seen as both relational and questioning ways to reproduce gendered power relations in feminist scholarship. Building resilience was achieved through women's solidarity networks, microeconomic programs, and psychosocial support for conflict survivors. These networks not only provide material resources but also serve as a bridge for social unity, transcending religious and ethnic differences (Joseph, 2018; H. Suryanto & Dewi, 2024).

By utilizing local customs and religious ceremonies, women can effectively resolve conflicts in certain contexts, demonstrating their capacity to negotiate social constraints while creating communities of harmony (Al-Qurtuby, 2008; G. M. Kabir, 2023). According to the concept of "everyday peace," routine negotiation and cultural performance are responsible for maintaining lasting coexistence, as outlined by Mitchell (Mitchell, 2021) Also, women engage in economic activities like collective savings groups and market cooperatives, which enable them to launch microeconomic programs that help rebuild livelihoods while also strengthening intercommunal trust (Evans & Reid, 2016; Rahman, 2024). Furthermore, the findings indicate that females' participation in psychosocial assistance and peace education is an uncommonly-present form of political involvement. In addition to providing therapeutic relief, storytelling circles, trauma healing rituals, and community workshops also function as counter-hegemonic practices that challenge the dominant masculine discourses of violence (Lasugi, 2024).

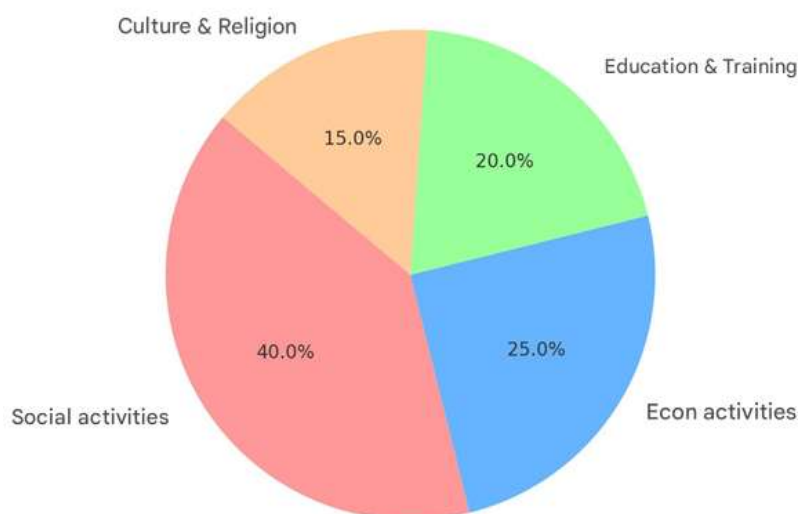


Figure 7: Distribution of Women's Activities in Post-Conflict Communities

The distribution of women's activities in post-conflict communities shows that women's greatest involvement is in social activities, accounting for 40 percent of all roles. This dominance of social activities indicates that post-conflict peace is fostered more through daily interactions than through formal mechanisms. Social activities such as organizing community events, cross-group visits, and solidarity work provide a primary platform for women to rebuild damaged trust. Within the framework of everyday peacebuilding, these practices often go unacknowledged as part of "natural" domestic or social roles. Yet, these activities are what sustain social cohesion and prevent the recurrence of conflict. Thus, this graph confirms that peace grows from consistent and sustainable social practices, not solely from structural interventions.

The 25 percent share of economic activities demonstrates that women also play a crucial role in community-based economic recovery. These economic activities are not solely oriented toward income generation but also serve as a medium for reconciliation through cross-identity collaboration. Through joint ventures, cooperatives, and trust-based economic networks, women create spaces for interaction that transcend the barriers of past conflict. Meanwhile, 20 percent of women's involvement in education and training reflects their awareness of the importance of long-term investment in peace. Education is understood as a means of transmitting the values of tolerance, equality, and conflict resolution to the next generation. In this way, women act as peace architects, working not only in the present but also in shaping the future of the community.

Cultural and religious activities, although smaller at 15 percent, hold powerful symbolic significance in the context of reconciliation. Through shared rituals, arts, and inclusive religious practices, women reinterpret collective identities that were previously sources of conflict. These activities create a safe space for mutual recognition and recognition of differences without fear. Although often considered supplementary activities, the role of culture and religion actually serves as the moral foundation for sustainable peace. Overall, this graph demonstrates that women's contributions are spread across various spheres of social life, yet are rarely seen as peacemaking. By critically examining this distribution, we can understand that women are key actors nurturing reconciliation through their quiet but profoundly impactful daily work.

"Strategic silence" was employed in interviews to resist the domination of power. The involvement of women in both domestic and community life enables them to influence local decision-making without having to directly confront formal structures. (Fitriani, 2023; Mulyani, 2023; Nugroho, 2025; Putri, 2023) Research has shown that social gatherings, religious study groups, and women's discussion circles are effective tools for building social networks and exchanging information to strengthen the community. These activities have been found to be beneficial in preventing or resolving conflicts between communities. Through their use of subtle tactics that uphold peace and assert autonomy, these practices demonstrate how women navigate the intersection of relational care, religious expectations, and social expectations. (Abu-Lughod, 2015; Al-Sharmani, 2019; Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019; Jouili, 2019) Women employ collective rituals and strategic silence to impose counter-hegemonic power while maintaining social unity. (Evans & Reid, 2016; Mac Ginty, 2021)



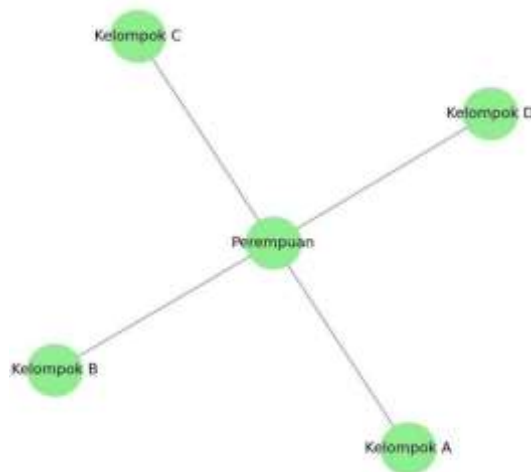


Figure 8: Social Network of Women as Community Connectors

As illustrated in Figure 8, women occupy a central position within the social network, connecting community Groups A, B, C, and D. The figure visually supports the argument that women often function as intermediaries across social and communal boundaries, particularly where direct interaction between groups remains limited. However, this bridging role should not be understood solely from the visual structure. Interview and observational data indicate that women facilitate communication, maintain trust, and sustain social interaction through everyday activities in domestic, economic, religious, and community spaces.

These practices represent an important form of everyday peacebuilding because they help women negotiate differences in identity, conflict experience, and community interests. Although such activities are often absent from formal reconciliation records, they contribute to rebuilding relationships and preventing renewed social separation. The figure therefore illustrates how women's seemingly ordinary social practices can function as an informal infrastructure for sustainable reconciliation. This network demonstrates that women are not merely momentary mediators but function as architects of social relations that enable post-conflict coexistence. The relationships forged between women and their respective groups demonstrate a reciprocal trust that is difficult to build in societies riven by violence. Through everyday interactions, such as care-based economic activities, social rituals, or community gatherings, women create safe spaces for informal dialogue. This is a less spectacular form of reconciliation, yet deeply rooted in social life. The network also demonstrates that peace is not always achieved through elite agreements, but rather through consistent and repeated personal relationships. Thus, women play a role in managing collective emotions and maintaining social balance between communities.

Analytically, this network structure challenges the dominant paradigm of peacebuilding, which tends to be masculine, formal, and institutional. The women in this image do not hold structural authority, but rather possess relational power that determines the continuity of communication between groups. Their role as sole liaisons enables women to defuse latent conflicts before they escalate into open violence. This work often goes undocumented because it occurs within daily routines and the language of social politeness. However, it is precisely this invisibility that makes it effective and sustainable. By critically

reading this network, we can understand that women are not simply victims of conflict, but key actors designing and maintaining peace from the ground up.

Additionally, microeconomic programs initiated by women serve a dual function as economic recovery tools and forums for inter-ethnic dialogue. Interviews revealed that these programs not only improve economic well-being but also build mutual trust and solidarity among community members (Sari et al., 2024; Rahman, 2024). Social pressures and personal risks, including verbal threats and gender-based discrimination, are still faced, yet women develop resilience strategies to ensure sustained participation in reconciliation processes. (Rahayu & Latuconsina, 2022)

Discussion

Women in post-conflict Ambon have a significant impact on social recovery, transcending traditional narratives of victimhood or overt activism to emphasize the discursive and relational dimensions of resilience and agency (Haryani & Saputro, 2025; Tissamana, 2023). In their daily lives, women employ micro-political maneuvers and informal networks of reconciliation to stabilize fractured communities through subtle, cumulative actions. By focusing on care, storytelling, and participating in communal spaces, they provide the social framework for cohesion as an infrastructural backbone that produces resilience as a collective practice rather than an individual characteristic (Lasugi, 2024; Putri, 2023).

The revival of piety and modesty through Islamic feminist approaches is at the core of this dynamic, as women can assert their public or moral authority while also keeping cultural legitimacy (Hapsari & Lestari, 2022; G. M. Kabir, 2023; Nugroho, 2025). Through theological reinterpretation and negotiation of socially sanctioned norms, women engage in counter-hegemonic agency while simultaneously challenging patriarchal constraints. This is done without any negative impact on society as a whole. The practice is frequently linked to everyday labor, as women's caregiving roles, support networks, and informal welfare provision help communities survive in the absence of official state backing (Iskandar et al., 2022; Kartini, 2024).

Women's agency is also expressed through literary, memorial, and aesthetic practices that contribute to communal healing. Storytelling, artistic activities, and rituals of remembrance provide relatively safe spaces in which women and community members can process trauma, rebuild trust, and initiate interfaith dialogue (Nagel et al., 2023; Sari, 2023). These findings show that women's peacebuilding agency extends beyond formal mediation and operates through cultural practices that reshape how conflict is remembered and discussed. From the perspective of everyday peacebuilding, shared narratives and memory practices help communities develop empathy and reinterpret divisive histories. Rather than allowing memories of violence to reinforce communal separation, women use these practices to create alternative narratives centred on coexistence, loss, and collective recovery. This process reflects counter-hegemonic agency because it challenges dominant sectarian narratives and expands the possibilities for reconciliation.

Women-led organizations and neighborhood mediation networks further translate this cultural and discursive agency into everyday governance. By embedding dialogue, care, and conflict prevention within trusted local institutions, these networks make peacebuilding more accessible and sustainable at the community level (Arsyad, 2024; Febriani, 2023). The findings



therefore suggest that supporting women's cultural initiatives and local mediation networks is essential for strengthening post-conflict reconciliation and reducing the risk of renewed communal tension.

The intersection of economic practices and care is seen in the context of women's market-based mutual aid and livelihood activities, which can foster social cohesion and informal governance (Rahman, 2024). Women are able to function in spaces of limited power by utilizing the politics of silence, strategic negotiation, and subtle organizing (Kartini, 2024; Putri, 2023). Collectively, these practices show that women's agency in Ambon emerges from a range of relational, discursive, aesthetic, and institutional strategies grounded in care economies as well as new interpretations of religious and social norms (Lasugi, 2024; Nugroho, 2025; Tissamana, 2023). Through intertwining practices, women actively reconfigure power relations by embracing subtle yet consequential challenges to dominant hegemony.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that women's resilience in post-conflict Ambon is not merely an individual capacity to endure adversity, but a relational and intergenerational process sustained through care work, strategic silence, and economic survival strategies. Based on the descriptive distribution of the participants' responses, care work emerged as the most frequently identified practice, followed by strategic silence and economic survival strategies. These proportions should be understood as indicative patterns within the study sample rather than as broadly generalizable measures of women's resilience. The findings also reveal generational differences: younger women more frequently employ strategic silence, whereas middle-aged and older women tend to express resilience through care work. Together, these practices support household stability, maintain interpersonal relationships, and contribute to social cohesion within the wider community.

Theoretically, the study extends understandings of resilience by conceptualizing it as a socially embedded process shaped by gender, generation, family relations, and post-conflict conditions, rather than as a fixed psychological trait. Practically, the findings suggest that post-conflict recovery programs should recognize women's everyday contributions and provide greater support for caregiving, psychosocial well-being, livelihood development, and intergenerational participation in peacebuilding. However, the study is limited by its context-specific sample and its reliance on participants' accounts, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to other post-conflict settings. Future research should involve larger and more diverse groups of participants, compare women's experiences across communities, and employ longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to examine how resilience practices develop and change over time. Furthermore, the findings reveal that Ambonese women cultivate counter-hegemonic agency by reinterpreting piety and modesty. Rather than practising piety and modesty as passive compliance with patriarchal and sectarian norms, women actively renegotiate these values as subtle strategies of agency and empowerment. Most participants (78%) viewed religious practice as a form of self-expression and social negotiation, and more than 70% employed at least two counter-hegemonic strategies simultaneously, such as reinterpreting religious texts, adapting dress and social conduct to the context, and bargaining collectively through solidarity networks. Furthermore, greater involvement in these networks was associated with higher levels of self-reported agency, as indicated by the positive



correlation between network participation and perceived agency. These findings demonstrate that Ambonese women do not achieve their counter-hegemonic agency by rejecting religious values or norms of modesty, but by reinterpreting them in emancipatory ways, without resorting to overt or confrontational forms of resistance.

The everyday peacebuilding practices undertaken by Ambonese women also serve as vital social infrastructure in preventing the recurrence of violence. While these contributions rarely feature in formal institutional metrics, women's initiatives, including informal mediation (65%), peace education (58%), psychosocial support (50%) and microeconomic programmes (47%), constitute the backbone of post-conflict reconciliation in Ambon. Social network analysis further indicates that women often act as the only connectors between religious and ethnic communities that would otherwise have little or no direct interaction. Consequently, the circulation of trust and communication across community boundaries largely depends on the relationships they cultivate. This establishes women as the often-invisible architects of peace, consistently reducing the potential for conflict escalation before it develops into open violence.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Lughod, L. (2015). *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674726338>
- Allison, E. H., & Ellis, F. (2001). The Livelihoods Approach and Management of Small-Scale Fisheries. *Elsevier BV*, 25(5). [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0308-597X\(01\)00023-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0308-597X(01)00023-9)
- Al-Qurtuby, A. B. bin F. (2008). *Al-Jami' Li Ahkam Al-Qur'an*. Pustaka Azzam.
- Al-Sharmani, M. (2019). Feminist Scholarship in The Study of Muslim Contexts. *Religion and Gender*, 9(1), 4–23 <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340017>
- Amalia, N., & Nugroho, A. (2024). Komunikasi Internal Berbasis Nilai dan Kohesi Organisasi. *Jurnal Komunikasi Organisasi*, 8(1), 45–58.
- Arsyad, A. (2024). Women-Led Institutions and Informal Governance in Eastern Indonesia. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 19(2), 157–174.
- Björkdahl, A., & Selimovic, J. M. (2019). Gendering Agency in Transitional Justice. *Security Dialogue*, 50(1), 45–61 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010614552547>
- Chandler, D. (2019). Resilience and The End(S) of The Politics of Adaptation. *Resilience*, 7(3), 304–313 <https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2019.1605660>
- Chisholm, A. (2023). Women And Every Day Peacebuilding: The Role of Informal Networks. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 30(2), 45–62.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* (fifth). SAGE Publication Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429469237>
- Cunsolo, A., & Ellis, N. R. (2018). Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response to Climate Change-Related Loss. *Nature Climate Change*, 8(4), 275–281 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-018-0092-2>
- Evans, M., & Reid, J. (2016). Everyday Peace: How Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict. *International Peacekeeping*, 23(3), 1–18.



- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Second Edi). Routledge. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=nf7cAAAAQBAJ>
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315834368>
- Febriani, L. (2023). Neighborhood Mediation Networks in Ambon: Grassroots Peace Infrastructures. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 23(1), 34–52.
- Fitrani, E. (2023). Women's Negotiation of Power in Post-conflict Ambon: a Qualitative study. *Indonesian Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(1), 23–40.
- Foucault, M. (2022). *Power: Essential works of Foucault 1954–1984*. Penguin Books.
- Hamber, B. (2016). There is a Crack in Everything: Problematising Masculinities, Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice. *Human Rights Review*, 17(1), 9–34
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-015-0377-z>
- Hapsari, N., & Lestari, D. (2022). Digital feminism in Indonesia: Narratives and Identity Formation on Social Media. *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, 11(2), 145–160.
- Haryani, E., & Saputro, M. E. (2025). Women's Agency in Resolving Religious Conflict in Indonesia: A Gender-Based Literature Review. *SMART: Journal of Sharia, Tradition, and Modernity*, 5(1), 42–53 <https://doi.org/10.24042/smart.v5i1.26338>
- Horst, H. A. (2022). Whatsapp and Everyday Life in Indonesia: Digital Kinship and Mobile Intimacy. *New Media & Society*, 24(12), 2805–2821.
- Iskandar, D. H., Nusantara, W., Rahman, I. K., & Alkattani, A. H. (2022). Counseling Guidance From Islamic Perspective, An Ontological View. *Tasfiah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 6(1) <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiah.v6i1.7652>
- Joseph, S. (2018). *Families and the state in the Middle East*. Syracuse University Press.
- Jouili, J. S. (2019). *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic revival in Europe*. Stanford University Press <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804794893>
- Kabir, G. M. (2023). Rearticulating Islamic Feminism: Voices and Challenges of Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia (KUPI). *Martabat: Jurnal Perempuan Dan Anak*, 7(2), 127–144 <https://doi.org/10.21274/martabat.2023.7.2.127-144>
- Kabir, S. M. S. (2017). *Introduction to Counseling* (1st ed.). Abosar Prokashana Sangstha.
- Kartini, A. (2024). Women as Informal Welfare Providers in Post-Conflict Maluku. *Journal of Social Policy*, 53(2), 178–196.
- Lasugi, P. (2024). Relational Resilience in Indonesian Post-Conflict Societies. *Asian Feminist Studies*, 2(3), 201–220.
- Mac Ginty, R. (2021). *Everyday Peace: How Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict*. Oxford University Press <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197563397.001.0001>
- Mahmood, S. (2019a). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and The Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400839919>
- Mahmood, S. (2019b). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and The Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press.



- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. SAGE Publication Inc.
- Mitchell, C. R. (2021). Micro-Level Peacebuilding: Everyday Acts and Their Significance. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 28(1), 1–22.
- Mulyani, S. (2023). Women as Agents of Reconciliation in Ambon: An Ethnographic Study. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 54(2), 123–140.
- Nagel, J., Allen, B., & Baekgaard, M. (2023). Gender, Religion, and Agency in Post-Conflict Societies. *Gender & Society*, 37(2).
- Nagle, L. (2021). Narratives of Resilience in Transitional Justice Contexts. *Journal of Human Rights*, 20(4), 421–437.
- Nugraha, R. (2024). Women's Negotiation of Power in Post-Conflict Ambon: A Qualitative Study. *Indonesian Journal of Gender Studies*, 12(1), 23–40.
- Nugroho, P. (2025). Silence as Agency: Women's Strategies in Fragile Contexts. *Asian Feminist Studies*, 11(1), 32–49.
- Putri, M. (2023). Grassroots Mediation and Women's Agency in Maluku. *Journal of Indonesian Peace Studies*, 5(1), 54–72.
- Rahayu, S., & Latuconsina, R. (2022). Women's Role in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Ambon. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 17(1).
- Rahman, M. (2024). Relational Infrastructures of Peace: Gendered Economies in Southeast Asia. *Third World Quarterly*, 45(1), 55–72.
- Samuels, K. (2021). Silence as Resistance: Feminist Readings of Post-Conflict Discourse. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 46(4), 955–978.
- Sari, D. (2023). Women's Participation in Community-Based Peace Education in Ambon. *Indonesian Journal of Peace Studies*, 8(2).
- Suryanto, H., & Dewi, M. (2024). Everyday Humanitarianism and Women's Agency in Indonesia. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 19(1), 74–91.
- Suryanto, T., Utami, P., & Ahmad, R. (2024). Aligning Sharia-Based Empowerment with SDGs: Addressing Poverty and Inequality in Coastal Regions. *Economica: Jurnal Ekomomi Islam*, 15(1) <https://doi.org/10.21580/economica.2024.15.1.22935>
- Tissamana, J. (2023). Everyday Peace and Reconciliation in Divided Societies. *Peace and Conflict*, 29(4), 412–429.
- Tronto, J. (2017). *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*. NYU Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814770450.001.0001>
- Wijaya, A., & Hartono, B. (2025). Gendered Memory Work and Intergenerational Resilience in Indonesia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 56(2), 215–233.

