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Kekulalang: Tradition and Women's Agency in Resistance against Patriarchal Domination

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Abstract

This study analyzes the Kekulalang tradition in Kampung Mamokeng, Negeri Tulehu, focusing on the roles and challenges faced by women in a patriarchal context. Kekulalang, as a local tradition, allows women to show their "agency" through active participation in social and cultural activities. However, this tradition also reinforces patriarchal structures that limit women's roles outside the domestic sphere. The research method used is a case study. This study examines how Kekulalang reproduces unbalanced social norms despite having critical cultural values. The solidarity formed among women in Kekulalang symbolizes the strength of the community but also highlights the risks of

preserving patriarchal norms. The local cultural perspective shows the importance of appreciating the meaning and value of local traditions without ignoring the struggle for gender equality. This study concludes that a deep understanding of the roles and challenges of women in Kekulalang can drive positive and inclusive change. A balanced approach sensitive to the local cultural context is needed to develop the Kekulalang tradition towards broader gender equality without losing its artistic essence. Thus, women can make a more significant contribution to decision-making and community development so that proper and sustainable gender equality is achieved.

Keywords: Kekulalang, Feminism, Tradition, Agency

Introduction

The Kekulalang Tradition in Kampung Mamokeng, Negeri (Desa) Tulehu, Maluku Province, Indonesia, is an integral part of the social and cultural life of the local community. This tradition involves the active role of women in organizing and carrying out traditional celebrations or events that symbolize solidarity and togetherness. Kekulalang is a resistance movement by women in Kampung Mamokeng to fight against male domination. Although some people consider it ordinary, when viewed from a feminist perspective, Kekulalang is a resistance movement because it is carried out based on the awareness that male domination has existed in domestic work, especially in *Tahlilan* celebrations. Kekulalang in Kampung Mamokeng was born around 2013. A woman initiated this movement because she felt she had to do something to help others lighten their burden after being abandoned by her family forever (passed away). Women's participation in Kekulalang shows a form of "agency" where they not only play a role in domestic tasks but also have a significant influence on the social life of their community (Kamenou, 2023; Kunin, 2023; Yadav & Jha, 2023) [29, 34, 77]. By underlining the concept of "agency" proposed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, women in the Kekulalang tradition demonstrate their ability to organize, lead, and influence the results of social activities (Sen, 2017) [65].

A woman initiated this movement because she felt she had to do something to help others lighten their burden after being abandoned by their family forever (died). Therefore, researching the Kampung Mamokeng community is essential because women play a central role in achieving the goal of justice. The process of inferiority works not only at the level of ethnicity and race but also at the level of inferiority to males, which includes excluding women from leadership, ownership, economic and educational access, existence and so on (Lugones, 2014) [42]. Women do not always consider profit issues but also social and religious relations. Women's collective action can have diverse implications for women's equality (Tadros, 2021) [71]. Practices built on gender material analysis enable the creation of solidarity by making differences productive rather than simply divisive (Salem, 2018) [62].

However, significant challenges and limitations exist behind the positive dimensions of this women's resistance movement. Domestic frameworks that are rooted in the Kekulalang tradition often limit women's space for movement outside the domestic realm (Martinez, 2019; O'Keefe, 2021; Wang *et al.*, 2023) [45, 54, 76]. The gender-based division of labour implemented in this tradition strengthens patriarchal structures by placing women in fixed domestic roles, preventing them from pursuing opportunities in the wider public and professional spheres. According to Sylvia Walby and Pierre Bourdieu, the division of labour based on gender is the result of social construction and cultural reproduction that strengthens patriarchal domination (Bourdieu, 2020; Littler & Walby, 2022) [6, 38].

Although providing strong emotional and social support, women's solidarity formed through Kekulalang can also strengthen patriarchal norms, limiting women's societal roles. By placing women in domestic tasks, this tradition expects women to prioritize domestic roles over public or professional activities. This reinforces gender identities that conform to patriarchal norms, as explained by Judith Butler in her theory of gender performativity (Lapniewska, 2022; Nasr, 2022) [36, 51].

On the other hand, Chandra Talpade Mohanty emphasized the importance of understanding local cultural practices in their context without compiling outside perspectives that may not be appropriate. The Kekulalang tradition has profound value and meaning for the women's community in Kampung Mamokeng, which is not fully reflected in Western feminist analysis. This tradition allows women to express their cultural identity and play an essential role in community life, albeit within a traditional framework (Galuh Dwi Ajeng, 2021) [18].

Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge and overcome the limitations of the kekulang tradition and encourage its evolution to support greater gender equality without losing valuable local cultural values. A balanced approach can help value women's contributions in the domestic context and, simultaneously, open up opportunities for them to participate in higher community-level decision-making.

Theoretical Framework

"Agency" in the context of feminism

The theory of "agency" focuses on the capacity of individuals to act independently and make meaningful choices in their lives. In the context of feminism, "agency" becomes very important because it is directly related to efforts to empower women and overcome the various forms of oppression they experience. Various thinkers and experts have developed theories about "agency" from different perspectives, highlighting essential aspects relevant to women's struggles to achieve justice and equality.

Amartya Sen is an economist and philosopher famous for his capability approach, which emphasizes the freedom and ability of individuals to achieve the life circumstances they consider valuable. In this framework, "agency" is seen as a person's ability to act and make choices that they consider essential. Sen believes women's empowerment is about providing access to economic resources and removing social and political barriers limiting their freedom. Sen's capability approach focuses on expanding the choices available to women so they can live in ways they consider valuable.

Similarly, Martha Nussbaum collaborated with Sen to develop the capability approach. Still, she added a more

specific normative dimension by identifying essential capabilities necessary for a dignified human life. Nussbaum emphasized the importance of providing conditions that allow women to fully develop and use their capabilities. According to Nussbaum, women's "agency" must be respected by giving fundamental rights such as education, health, and economic opportunities. Thus, this approach focuses on the result and the empowerment process that allows women to become autonomous agents.

In contrast to Nussbaum and Sen, Judith Butler is a gender theorist who introduced the concept of gender performativity. According to Butler, gender results from repeated actions and performances, not something inherent in the individual. This concept expands the understanding of "agency" in feminism by showing how individuals can disrupt and transform gender norms through their actions. In Butler's view, "agency" involves challenging and changing the social structures that shape gender identity, creating space for more authentic and oppressive self-expression.

Nancy Fraser emphasizes the importance of combining economic redistribution with social recognition in achieving gender justice. According to Fraser, women's "agency" is influenced by access to financial resources and the recognition and appreciation of their identities and contributions to society. Thus, efforts to empower women must include strategies to address economic inequalities while promoting more equitable social recognition.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty is a postcolonial feminist who emphasizes the importance of understanding women's "agency" in a global context. She critiques Western feminist approaches that often ignore women's experiences in developing countries. Mohanty highlights the importance of an intersectional analysis considering overlapping colonial, economic, and cultural forces in understanding women's "agency." Thus, women's empowerment must be seen in a broader local and global context, involving struggles against multiple, interrelated forms of oppression.

By understanding these theories and perspectives on "agency," we can see how women's empowerment can be achieved through a holistic and interdisciplinary approach that recognizes the complexity of women's experiences and the importance of respecting their freedom and autonomy.

Feminism

Feminism is a women's movement that fights for equal rights, status, freedom, and gender issues, especially women's emancipation (Priyadarshini *et al.*, 2022) [58]. Feminism is socially constructed, at once constructive and universal as an activity, but historically specific as consisting of matter and mind (Phelan, 2017) [57]. Another opinion says that feminism is the idea of a social and political movement to achieve women's equality or a desire that originates from injustice in women's rights. Feminism began with a perception of injustice in women's position in society: women were seen as weak, emotional, and limited to homemakers, and they were even considered sexual tools in relationships. Women are considered second-class citizens (Mardiyan & Tawami, 2022) [44].

By renegotiating feminism as ownership, they empower women in ownership and reshape feminist discourse on support based on solidarity. The reasons can be explained through solidarity narratives that enable the creation of feminist solidarity. This reconciliation is also expressed through renegotiation as feminism, namely competition, is

transformed into positive values to expand the feminist struggle (Lauri, 2021) [37].

For women's groups to survive, a significant social revolution among women is needed (Dagunduro & Adenugba, 2020) [15]. Women's empowerment requires combined action by the state, society, the private sector, and women's activists. The state acts as an empowerment actor through public policy (Verzosi Vargas, 2020) [74]. Even though accepting gender inequality in society still applies, women have become social movement actors through various forms of organisation (Rousseau & Hudon, 2016) [60]. More representation of women and structural attention to women's interests not only contribute to fair and democratic politics but also improve the quality of democratic decision-making and policy-making.

However, the concept or movement of feminism is blamed by INCELS because feminism is considered to disrupt the natural order in which women and the broader social structure are organised in the realm of heterosexual monogamy. Using femme phobia as a lens through which to view the issue, Menzie (2022) [47] considers how INCELS use the hetero-patriarchal concept of emphasised femininity to describe the pervasive social conditions that force women to remain in an inferior niche. Femmephobia casts feminine expression as a performance inherent in and directed at masculine subjects (Menzie, 2022) [47]. Therefore, in a male-centred society, overall development is only possible by empowering women lagging behind men (Karunakaran & K Smitha, 2021) [30]. Social revolution and women's empowerment are needed, and particular policy interventions from the government are needed to ensure gender equality and access to justice (Dagunduro & Adenugba, 2020; Karunakaran & K Smitha, 2021) [15, 30]. Women who occupy essential roles in an organisation will positively influence the implementation of gender equality policies (Furlotti *et al.*, 2019) [17]. A leader's gender has little impact on policy compliance. Including women in society only deals with symptoms of gender inequality rather than structures that provide equal opportunities (Andersson, 2017) [1]. The involvement of women in decision-making helps sustainable economic development (Meador & O'Brien, 2019) [46]. In addition, women's concern for the environment is higher than men's (Atchison & Down, 2019) [3].

Group interests influence their ideological beliefs and support retributive policies only when they have conscious experience with those policies. Those with policy experience express policy attitudes that align with the interests of gender groups, but the opposite is true for those who lack experience. Men having conscious experience with the policy expressed more opposition and neo-sexism. In contrast, experienced women consciously express more policy support than their inexperienced counterparts. Group interests are an essential determinant of policy attitudes and ideological beliefs.

Patriarchy and Domination

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power, dominating political leadership roles, control over moral authority, privileges in society, and control over property (Nisaq & Al-Hafizh, 2022) [52]. This system results in systemic oppression of women, thus forcing a hierarchical structure that gives privilege to men, especially those who adhere to traditional ideas about masculinity (Corvo &

Golding, 2022; Pearson, 2019) [14, 56]. Traditional patriarchy refers to a societal system in which men hold primary power and authority, dominating political leadership, economic control, and social influence. This system is characterized by rigid gender roles, where men usually occupy privileged positions, and women are placed in subordinate roles (Goli *et al.*, 2022; Liu, 2022) [20, 39].

The characteristics of traditional patriarchy are:

First, Male dominance and authority in political leadership essentially hold positions of political power, making decisions that shape society and regulate the lives of its members. While in economic control, men control financial resources, property ownership, and access to employment opportunities, while women have limited economic autonomy. In the social field, men have a more significant influence in shaping cultural norms, values, and institutions and perpetuating systems that maintain male dominance (Chen & Hsieh, 2017) [11].

Second, traditional patriarchal societies enforce strict gender roles, assigning certain behaviours, responsibilities, and expectations based on gender. This is characterized by the expectation that men be the primary breadwinners for their families, while women are only given domestic roles as caregivers and homemakers. In addition, women have limited autonomy and decision-making power, especially in matters of finances, education, and family matters (Bullough *et al.*, 2022; Löffler & Greitemeyer, 2023) [7, 40].

Fourth, Family structure in traditional patriarchal societies has patrilineal inheritance, namely property, and family lineage is inherited through male descendants; this aims to strengthen the lineage and male authority in the family. As a result, leadership in the family is held by the father or oldest male, with decisions made in his best interests and often without input from other family members. For example, the father or oldest male in the family often arranges marriages for the women in the family, prioritizing factors such as social status, wealth, and lineage over individual preferences (Casari *et al.*, 2019; Gultom, 2017) [10, 21]. Additionally, women do not have autonomy over their bodies. Women's bodies and reproductive choices can be regulated by patriarchal norms (Sifris, 2023) [66].

Research Methodology

This research will use a case study design to focus specifically on Kampung Mamokeng, Negeri Tulehu, Maluku Province, Indonesia, and Kekulalang practices. The case study will provide in-depth and contextual insight into how grasshoppers are practised and valued in these communities. This aims to explore in more detail the practice of Kekulalang, the role of women in this tradition, and its impact on the community (Hutchings *et al.*, 2018; Kalua, 2023; Miller *et al.*, 2023) [26, 28, 48].

Interviews with women involved in Kekulalang, including key implementers, participants, and other stakeholders. In-depth interviews will help explore personal views, experiences, and the meaning of grasshoppers for individuals and communities. Researchers used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to provide space for respondents to share their stories and perspectives in detail (George, 2022; Muttuvelu *et al.*, 2022; Ruslin *et al.*, 2022) [19, 50, 61]. In addition, researchers used Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to discuss the role and impact of killing in women's groups in Kampung Mamokeng (O. Nyumba *et al.* 2018) [55]. This discussion will provide insight into the

community's collective perspectives and social dynamics. Organize discussions with small groups of women from various backgrounds to gain diverse views on the grasshopper. Collect and analyze documents or records related to kekulang, such as traditional books, historical records, or event documentation. This can provide additional context and support data collected from observations and interviews. Local archives, cultural records, or literature related to killing.

Result and Discussion

Kekulang as a form of "Agency": Control and Influence in Social Life

The Kekulang tradition in Kampung Mamokeng, Negeri Tulehu, Maluku Province, offers a rich view of the role of women in the local cultural context. By underlining the concept of "agency" proposed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, we can understand how women in this tradition have significant control and influence in their communities' social life and rituals. This article will explore the positive dimensions of women's resistance movements through active participation, highlighting the challenges and limitations that may exist due to entrenched domestic frameworks. Through in-depth analysis, we will see how these traditions can evolve to support greater gender equality without losing precious local cultural values (Sen, 2017; Sugi, 2025) [65, 70].

The Kekulang tradition gives women significant control over essential aspects of their community life. By leading in event preparation, women demonstrate their ability to organize, lead, and influence the outcome of social activities. This is a form of "agency" in which women participate and have a voice in important community decisions (Sen, 2017; Veronese *et al.*, 2023) [65, 73].

In the context of Kekulang, women have space to participate actively in social life and community rituals. This participation allows them to express their views, demonstrate their skills, and build a solid social network. Although this framework is within the domestic realm, their active role in this tradition shows they have a voice valued and recognized within the community.

Although women's roles in Kekulang are often considered traditional, this does not mean they do not have "agency." Instead, women use this role to empower themselves and their communities. By demonstrating expertise in complex and essential tasks, they establish their position as valuable and influential members of society (Aragon, 2023) [2].

The Kekulang tradition can be seen as building women's capabilities per Nussbaum's concept. These capabilities include practical skills in organizing and executing events and social skills in building and maintaining community relationships. Building these capabilities expands the range of lives that women can lead, giving them more choices and opportunities (Kauffer & Torres, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2024) [31, 78].

Although the Kekulang tradition provides "agency" to women in the domestic context, this framework can also limit their space outside the domestic realm. These restrictions may prevent women from pursuing opportunities in the public or professional sphere that may be more economically and socially beneficial. Although traditions such as Kekulang provide women with active roles in domestic contexts, these frameworks often also create boundaries that affect their participation in the public and

professional spheres—for example, traditional roles. In many societies, women's roles are often identified with domestic responsibilities, such as caring for the household and family. These norms can create strong expectations that women should prioritize domestic roles over public or professional activities. Domestic traditions such as Kekulang may give women recognition within the context of the family and local community. However, these awards are often different from the same recognition in the public or professional sphere.

There is a risk that these traditions could reinforce traditional gender roles that hinder broader social change toward gender equality. By recognizing and valuing women's contributions only in the domestic context, there is the potential that patriarchal norms that limit women's roles in broader society are maintained (Scott *et al.*, 2021) [63].

Expanding women's opportunities into the public sphere is essential to maximizing their potential for "agency" in the Kekulang tradition. This can be done by recognizing their skills and contributions in the broader context and creating opportunities for women to participate in higher community-level decision-making (Keleher, 2014; Lopes Cardozo *et al.*, 2022) [32, 41].

The Kekulang tradition can develop to become more inclusive and egalitarian. This includes involving men in some aspects of event preparation or giving equal recognition to women for their contributions. This evolution can help overcome the limitations of traditional gender roles and strengthen women's agency in all aspects of community life.

The Kekulang tradition in Kampung Mamokeng, Negeri Tulehu, provides an exciting example of how women can have "agency" in the local cultural context. Through active participation and significant influence in event preparation, women demonstrate their ability to lead and organize, which empowers them within the domestic framework. However, it is essential to acknowledge and address the existing limitations and encourage the evolution of these traditions to support greater gender equality. A balanced approach can help respect local cultural values while promoting positive social change.

Kekulang as a Symbol of Women's Solidarity

According to feminist experts, the tradition of mutual assistance between women at celebrations in Kampung Mamokeng can be seen as a manifestation of women's solidarity. This solidarity is a form of collective strength that strengthens women's communities and helps them face social and economic challenges. Bell Hooks, a prominent feminist figure, argues that women's solidarity is essential to create communities that support and empower women, especially in the context of patriarchy, which often dominates (Biana, 2020, 2023; Hooks, 2014; Stecher & Zapata, 2022) [4, 5, 25, 68].

In the celebration tradition in Kampung Mamokeng, women's solidarity is seen through cooperation and mutual assistance between women to organize Tahililan. Women work together on various tasks, such as cooking, decorating, and event planning. This practice is about practical assistance and reflects the close social relations between women. This solidarity creates a strong support network, helping women face everyday situations and challenges (Eschle, 2004; Nasr, 2022) [16, 51].

Women's solidarity shows collective strength, where the individual strengths of women are combined to achieve a common goal. This helps overcome women's challenges, including economic, social, and cultural limitations (Kim, 2022; Kwan, 2022) [33, 35]. The women's community becomes more robust and can survive difficult situations with solidarity. It also strengthens women's sense of belonging and collective identity, strengthening the community. Kekulalang creates a space where women can demonstrate their collective power through rituals. For example, women's roles at celebrations often involve close collaboration, such as preparing large quantities of food or decorating the event venue, demonstrating group efficiency and synergy.

Bell Hooks, a prominent feminist, emphasized the importance of women's solidarity in creating communities that support and empower women. According to Hooks, this solidarity is essential to overcome the patriarchal oppression that often dominates society. Hooks argues that patriarchy often creates divisions among women, exploiting differences and conflict to maintain dominant power. Women's solidarity helps counter these effects by creating spaces where women can support each other and work together for common goals (Biana, 2020, 2023; Stecher & Zapata, 2022) [4, 5, 68].

Women's solidarity in this tradition creates strong connectedness among community members. Working together at a celebration allows women to get to know each other better and build more solid relationships. This social support is essential in overcoming personal and collective challenges (Kim, 2022; Kwan, 2022) [33, 35].

Women's solidarity can increase their access to economic resources and employment opportunities. By working together, women can create and exploit economic opportunities that might not be available if they worked alone. By working together on celebrations, women can utilize resources more efficiently. For example, they can share food ingredients and equipment, reduce individual costs, and ensure that events run on a more limited budget. Women's solidarity can contribute to economic empowerment by creating opportunities to engage in joint ventures, such as catering or event-related crafts. This can help women earn additional income and improve their economic well-being (Ofreneo & Hega, 2016; Vargas & Brito, 2023) [53, 72].

Support networks formed through women's solidarity provide essential emotional and social assistance. This helps women feel more connected and better able to face personal and social challenges. Women's solidarity can encourage social change by fighting for women's rights and gender equality. By uniting, women can advocate for policies and social change that support them more effectively (Rahman *et al.*, 2024; Soler-i-Martí *et al.*, 2021) [59, 67].

Women's solidarity in the context of celebration traditions in Kampung Mamokeng is a concrete example of collective power strengthening women's communities. This reflects the principles emphasized by Bell Hooks regarding the importance of solidarity in creating communities that support and empower women, especially in facing the challenges faced in patriarchal societies. This solidarity not only helps in specific social contexts but also plays a role in strengthening women's position in society.

Patriarchal Criticism of Kekulalang and Restrictions on Women's Space

Although this tradition strengthens solidarity and provides agency, it can also reinforce traditional gender roles that limit women's movement. Sylvia Walby argues that the gender-based division of labour reinforces patriarchal structures by placing women in fixed domestic roles (Sugi, 2023; Walby, 1989) [69, 75]. In Kekulalang, women's roles that focus on domestic tasks such as cooking, organizing, and cleaning can reinforce the norm that these jobs are women's natural domain, preventing them from pursuing opportunities in the public and professional spheres.

Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy identifies the gendered division of labour as one of the main structures that sustain patriarchy. According to Walby, the division of tasks based on "ability and expertise" is often the result of social norms that have internalized specific gender roles from an early age. Domestic tasks such as cooking, organizing, and cleaning are generally considered to be the domain of women. This strengthens women's position in the domestic sphere and hinders their access to broader public and professional roles (Segal & Walby, 1991) [64].

Pierre Bourdieu argued that social structures and labour divisions that appear natural result from social construction and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 2020; Maggio, 2018) [6, 43]. The division of tasks based on "ability and expertise" in the household context reflects habitus and cultural capital passed down from generation to generation. This reinforces patriarchal dominance by asserting that women are more "suited" to domestic tasks, while men are directed towards roles that are more public and influential.

Judith Butler, in her work on gender performativity, states that gender roles and identities are not something inherent or natural but rather the result of repeated actions that are reinforced by social norms. The division of domestic tasks based on "ability and expertise" exemplifies how everyday actions reinforce existing gender norms. By placing women in specific roles consistently, society indirectly confirms a gender identity that is by patriarchal norms (Butler, 2011, 2022) [8, 9].

Nancy Chodorow argues that the gendered division of roles in families and communities reproduces patriarchal values (Chodorow, 2002) [12]. The Kekulalang tradition, by assigning women to specific tasks, teaches subsequent generations to accept and continue this division of labour. This limits the social change needed to achieve greater gender equality. Nancy Chodorow uses a psychoanalytic approach to explain how the gender division of labour in the family reproduces patriarchy. She argued that women, through early socialization, are conditioned to identify themselves with care and domestic tasks. The division of tasks based on "ability and expertise" reinforces this identification and perpetuates a cycle of social reproduction in which women remain responsible for domestic tasks. At the same time, men are freed to pursue more economically and socially dominant roles (Chodorow, 2023) [13].

According to Heidi Hartmann, materialist feminism criticizes how women's domestic work is often not economically valued. In the context of killing, although women's work is essential to the success of the event, it does not receive equal recognition or compensation. This reinforces women's position as domestic workers without

compensation commensurate with their contribution. Heidi Hartmann, within the framework of materialist feminism, sees the division of labour based on gender as a form of economic exploitation where women's work in the domestic sphere is not economically valued. The division of tasks based on "ability and expertise" often hides the fact that domestic work, although crucial, does not receive proper recognition or compensation. This reinforces patriarchal structures by ensuring that the female workforce remains in an economically and socially inferior position (H. Hartmann, 1981, 2020; H. I. Hartmann, 1979) [22, 24].

Chandra Talpade Mohanty emphasizes the importance of understanding local cultural practices in their context without compiling outside perspectives that may be inappropriate. The Kekulalang tradition may have deep value and meaning for the women's community in Kampung Mamokeng, which is not fully reflected in Western feminist analysis. These traditions allow women to express their cultural identity and play an essential role in community life, albeit within a traditional framework. Mohanty emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural practices such as the grasshopper in their cultural and social context. This means analyzing the practice based on the values, norms, and experiences relevant to the local community without adopting outside perspectives that may not be appropriate or relevant. Western feminist perspectives often generalize or assess cultural practices from a universal viewpoint that can ignore local complexity and meaning. Mohanty rejects this approach and encourages viewing local practices, such as the grasshopper, as part of a unique social and cultural structure (Jain, 2003; Mohanty *et al.*, 1991) [27, 49].

In Kampung Mamokeng, the Kekulalang tradition is a cultural practice with deep value and meaning for the women's community. This practice involves cooperation and solidarity in organizing celebrations or traditional events, integral to their social and cultural life. Kekulalang is not only about practical activities but is also a form of expression of solidarity and empowerment within the women's community. It creates a space where women can demonstrate their collective power, influence social structures, and build solid relationships among themselves (Jain, 2003; Mohanty *et al.*, 1991) [27, 49].

Mohanty criticizes how Western feminism is often influenced by colonialism and imperialism, which tends to exoticize or judge non-Western cultural practices from an unfair perspective. In this case, Kekulalang may be considered a "primitive" or "backward" tradition when viewed from a Western perspective that does not understand the context. Applying Western feminist standards or theories that do not take local context into account can ignore how the grasshopper functions and is valued in Kampung Mamokeng society. This can lead to inaccurate assessments and even harm to local communities.

This tradition can develop and change according to social dynamics and community needs. With awareness and collective effort, communities can introduce changes that enable more inclusive and egalitarian roles. For example, men can be involved in domestic tasks, or women can be recognized and valued more equally.

The Kekulalang tradition in Kampung Mamokeng, Negeri Tulehu, Maluku Province, Indonesia, has a positive side in strengthening solidarity and providing agency to women in the local cultural context. However, this tradition can also

strengthen traditional gender roles that limit women's movement. This analysis shows the importance of a balanced approach in understanding and assessing cultural practices and encouraging changes that enable greater gender equality without losing valuable local cultural values.

Conclusion

The Kekulalang tradition in Kampung Mamokeng, Negeri Tulehu, Maluku Province, Indonesia, is an arena for women to play an active role in social and cultural life while also illustrating the complexities and challenges faced in a patriarchal context. On the one hand, this tradition provides space for women to demonstrate their "agency" in organizing and carrying out social activities. On the other hand, the domestic framework that reinforces the patriarchal structure limits women's movement outside the domestic sphere. Women's solidarity formed through Kekulalang is a symbol of community strength but also risks reinforcing patriarchal norms that hinder gender equality. Expert analysis helps reveal how these traditions reproduce unequal social structures despite having essential cultural values. However, it is important to remember that local cultural perspectives have unique values and must be respected. An approach that focuses too much on external perspectives can ignore local traditions' deep meaning and value. Therefore, a balanced approach sensitive to the local cultural context is needed to support the evolution of the Kekulalang tradition towards greater gender equality without losing its artistic essence. Positive and inclusive change can be encouraged by a deep understanding of the roles and challenges of women in the Kekulalang tradition. These efforts strengthen women's societal roles and open opportunities to contribute more broadly to decision-making and community development. Only by recognizing and addressing existing barriers and respecting local cultural values can we achieve true and sustainable gender equality.

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