

Women's Gender Bias in the Nyerod Marriage System in Banjar Village

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Abstract. Marriage customs in Bali often reflect deeply rooted cultural traditions, yet some practices raise concerns about gender inequality. The nyerod marriage system, particularly within the Triwangsa caste, obliges women from higher castes to elope with men of lower castes, potentially restricting women's freedom and reinforcing social stigma. While Balinese marriage traditions have been widely studied, limited attention has been paid to how women themselves perceive gender bias within this system. This study aims to explore women's lived experiences of gender injustice in nyerod marriages and to assess its broader implications for gender equality in Balinese society. A qualitative approach was employed through in-depth interviews with Triwangsa women aged 15–35 years in Banjar Village, Buleleng Regency. The findings indicate that love or emotional attachment is the most frequently cited reason for nyerod marriage (50%), followed by economic considerations and family pressure. Nonetheless, participants reported constraints in partner choice, strained family relationships, and stigmatization when rejecting marriage within their caste. These experiences highlight how nyerod marriage, although culturally accepted, perpetuates women's subordination and reinforces unequal power relations. The study concludes that cultural traditions must be critically re-examined to ensure they align with principles of gender equity. The implications underscore the need for community dialogue, legal safeguards, and increased awareness of women's rights to balance respect for cultural heritage with the pursuit of gender justice.

Keywords: Nyerod Marriage; Balinese Culture; Traditional Practices; Gender Bias

1 Introduction

Customs in Bali are still very strongly related to all systems of Balinese life, including marriage. Traditional marriage is a mandatory requirement for couples who want to get married in Bali. In Balinese traditional marriage, there is one type of traditional marriage called "nganten nyerod", which is a marriage system in which the female party has a higher

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caste (Brahmin, Ksatria, and Vaisya) than the male party which requires the female party to be taken "run away" by the male party to get married. Although the caste system in Bali is not fully practiced with the actual caste system as in India, but the fact is that there are still many people who still associate caste in terms of traditional marriage [1]. The relationship between caste and traditional marriage requires Triwangsa women to "let go" of family ties with their single families; such as losing caste, limitations to return to single homes and some are not even given permission at all, and the stigma of "nista" for not marrying a man whose caste matches. The patrilineal social structure (following men) makes women weaker and becomes the disadvantaged party of the nyered marriage system which can lead to gender bias in society.

Academic debates in gender studies, law, and anthropology highlight that marriage traditions are not only cultural rituals but also arenas of power, control, and inequality [2,3]. Gender studies emphasize how patriarchal structures manifest through customary practices, producing systemic disadvantages for women. Anthropological perspectives point to the symbolic meanings of rituals such as *patiwangi*, which severs a woman's ties to her natal family when she marries down caste, thereby reinforcing her subordinate status. Meanwhile, legal scholarship stresses the ongoing tension between state law—which abolished caste-based marriage restrictions through Paswara DPRD Bali No. 11/1951—and customary law, which continues to impose sanctions and stigma on women who marry outside their caste. These perspectives show how nyered marriage is located at the intersection of culture, law, and gender relations.

Gender bias comes from two words, namely bias, it means deviation, tendency of opinion, or direction. Gender itself means the sex of women or men seen from a social perspective. Gender bias can be interpreted as a deviation in the treatment or tendency of one party's opinion that can harm one other party, which in this study refers to the disadvantage of Triwangsa women who do nyered marriage. Gender bias can arise because the party that goes down in caste is only a woman who has a higher caste, while if a Triwangsa man marries a woman with a lower caste, it does not matter [4]. The existence of this stigma makes many Triwangsa women experience pressure in choosing a partner and affects their social life which makes the wrong patriarchal culture in Bali, restrictions on choosing a partner for women, and the stigma of being a "disgrace" if they do not marry during their lifetime or marry a man who is not of the same caste. Although studies on Balinese marriage traditions are extensive, most focus on cultural symbolism, legal validity, or the sustainability of the caste system. Few have examined how Triwangsa women themselves perceive and experience gender bias within the nyered system, particularly its psychological, social, and legal implications. The absence of such perspectives limits our understanding of how cultural traditions perpetuate structural gender inequalities and affect women's autonomy in contemporary Balinese society [5].

Factors that cause Triwangsa women to marry nyered include love, emotional closeness, economic conditions, and pregnancy outside of marriage. This nyered system involves various parties such as the *pemangku*, *klian adat*, and *bendesa adat* who have a role in the implementation of the ceremony. The social implications of nyered marriage include difficult adaptation, negative labeling (labelling), and apparent gender bias against women who undergo nyered marriage. This research emphasizes that women who undergo nyered marriage receive unfair treatment which can be used as a source of learning about gender injustice in sociology. This system indirectly creates unequal power relations in Balinese society, where women's rights and autonomy to determine their life partners are limited by customary norms and structures. In the long run, this not only inhibits women's participation in social life, but also has the potential to reinforce structural inequalities in education, economics, and decision-making at the family and community levels [6].

In addition, although the prohibition of different caste marriages has been legally abolished since 1951 through Paswara DPRD Bali No. 11 of 1951, the implementation of customs such as the *patiwangi* ceremony which lowers the caste of women still takes place and creates legal uncertainty and social injustice, especially for women who marry different castes and experience divorce. The legal consequences of divorce in *nyerod* marriages cause women's positions to become blurred and vulnerable to discrimination, especially in terms of inheritance rights and social status in Balinese society. The *patiwangi* ceremony, which aims to sever a woman's relationship with her family, symbolically confirms that a woman who moves down a caste is no longer considered part of her community of origin. This has a huge psychological impact on women, because in addition to losing their social rights, they also lose their cultural identity. It is not uncommon for women who experience this condition to choose to withdraw from social spaces for fear of social judgment. This condition not only causes personal wounds, but also strengthens the cycle of gender inequality that continues to be passed down from generation to generation. Without critical reflection on these customary practices, women will continue to be in a subordinate position in the social structure of Balinese society [1,7]

Banjar village, Buleleng district was chosen because in this village there are still many *griyas* or residences of *Triwangsa* women, especially the Brahmin caste. From the large number of *griyas* and the population of *Triwangsa* women, it can lead to the number of *nyerod* marriage practices that are commonplace and can result in gender bias if the community continues to apply the stigma of "disgrace" if they do not marry someone of the same caste. In view of these problems, the author is interested in conducting a study and research in Banjar Village, Buleleng Regency to further examine whether *Triwangsa* women in Banjar Village experience gender bias treatment from the community and their families, as well as the social and legal implications that accompany it. With this research, it is hoped that the community and traditional leaders will begin to open a space for critical discussion of the customary system that has been considered absolute. The transformation of *adat* does not mean eliminating the noble values of Balinese culture, but making it more adaptive, equitable, and respectful of the dignity of all individuals, including women. This study is expected to make an important contribution to understanding the social and cultural dynamics of Bali and encourage changes in attitudes towards gender equality in the context of traditional marriage. This study therefore aims to analyze the forms of gender bias experienced by *Triwangsa* women in the *nyerod* marriage system in Banjar Village, Buleleng Regency, and to explore its wider implications for gender equality in Balinese society.

2 Method

This study employed a qualitative study and in-depth interviews were the main tool for data collection. The subjects were *Triwangsa* women (descendants) originated from three high caste group (Brahmin, Ksatria, and Vaisya) aged 15–35 years who are dwelling in Banjar Village, Buleleng Regency. A purposive sample of 50 participants was recruited by them as being relevant to their aims. Additional details from female interviews were corroborated by families and key informants for contextual understanding. The sample approach was underpinned by that of data saturation and data collection was concluded once participants responses were repeating and no new themes were evident. To strengthen the credibility of the study, three forms of validation were applied: (1) triangulation of sources (interviews, observations, documents), (2) member checks (verification and validation of key interpretations with informants), and (3) peer debriefing with research colleagues. Analysis Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Once conducted, the interviews were written out in full, then analyzed. 17 Subsequent to the first round of examination, almi read all the responses and applied open coding to extract themes from those statements deemed

important. The codes were subsequently sorted into categories via axial coding. Lastly, key themes were drawn out, including types of gender bias, social consequences for women, and resistance and adaptation. This analysis enabled the researchers to make sense Leadership without dominant masculinity 15 of the findings in a meaningful manner.

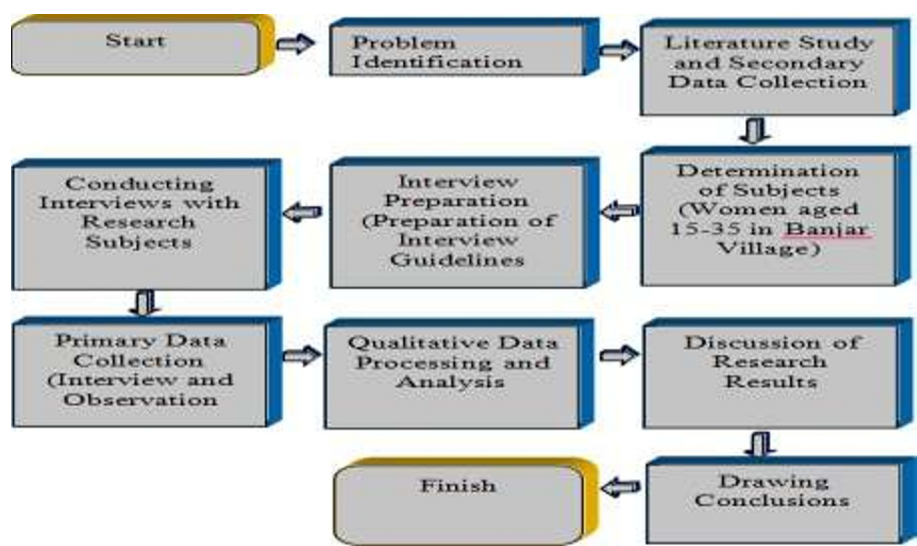


Fig. 1. Research Flow Chart

3 Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows that most reasons women decide to marry outside the marriage limits stem from love or emotional closeness, which makes up about 50%. Other factors, like economic issues and family or traditional pressure, are also important, representing around 20% and 12%, respectively. Premarital pregnancy is a smaller reason, contributing 10%.

Table 1. Reasons why Triwangsa women do Nyerod marriage

No.	Reason	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Love or Emotional Closeness	25	50%
2.	Economic Condition	10	20%
3.	Pregnancy outside of marriage	5	10%
4.	Family pressure / customs	6	12%
Total		50	100%

Table 2. Forms of Gender Bias Experienced

No.	Reason	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Limitations of returning to the home of origin	13	26%
2.	Loss of caste rights	10	20%
3.	Stigma of "disgrace" from society	20	40%
4.	Restrictions on choosing a partner	7	14%
Total		50	100%

Interviews and questionnaires given to informants in Banjar showed that 40% of the community felt the stigma of "disgrace" (Table 2). This was followed by restrictions on returning home, affecting 26%. Twenty percent felt they had lost their caste rights. Lastly, 14% experienced limitations when choosing a partner, mostly among women. A small number of respondents, 8%, either didn't know or didn't provide an answer.

Table 3. Social Impact after Performing Kawin Nyerod

No.	Reason	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Relationship with family is tenuous	13	26%
2	Treated differently in the community	13	26%
3	Psychological pressure	10	20%
4	No significant impact	14	28%
Total		50	100%

Table 4. Expectations and Suggestions from Triwangsa Women

No.	Reason	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	There is a change in customs to be more fair	18	36%
2	Recognition of women's rights	13	26%
3	Socialization of equality	15	30%
4	Don't know/not answering	4	8%
Total		50	100%

According to the data in Table 3 and Table 4, after women go through nyerod marriage, 26% of them experience strained family relationships and notice that society treats them differently. Twenty percent of the community feels psychological pressure, while 28% say they do not feel a significant impact from nyerod marriage. To tackle these issues, many women hope for changes in customs or a shift in society's views about nyerod marriage. Women are also seeking more fair changes in customs (36%), acknowledgment of women's rights (26%), and promotion of gender equality in society (30%).

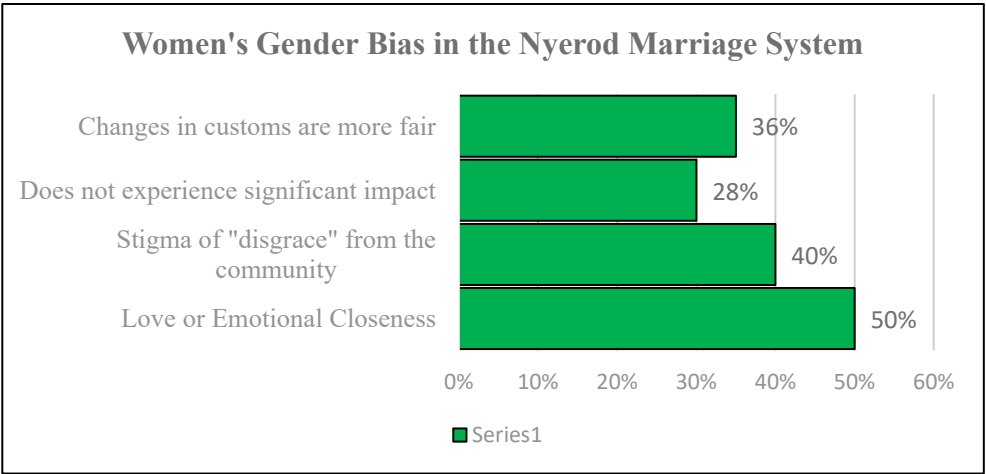


Fig. 2. Women's Gender Bias in the Nyerod Marriage System

Table 5. Description and Aspects of Factors in Gender Bias in Nyerod Marriages

No.	Aspect	Description
1.	Caste System	Triwangsa women (Brahma, Ksatria, Vaisya) who marry a man with a lower caste must "down caste" and lose their social rights.
2.	Right to choose a spouse	Women usually experience restrictions in choosing a partner, especially the pressure to marry a man of equal caste in order to maintain family honor and avoid the stigma of "disgrace" in society.
3.	Social Stigma	Women who marry lower-caste men are negatively stigmatized and even ostracized by their families and the general public.
4.	Family Relations	After a nyerod marriage, women often experience limitations or prohibitions on returning to their original family home, sometimes even being cut off from family relations.
5.	Patrilineal Social Structure	The patrilineal system strengthens men's position in the family and society, making women more vulnerable to unfair treatment and discrimination.
6.	Legal and Social Implications	Although the prohibition of different castes has been legally abolished, it is still practiced in customs such as the patiwangi ceremony, which creates legal uncertainty and discrimination, including in inheritance rights.

Based on the results of this study, the main reasons for Triwangsa women in Banjar Village to marry nyerod are love or emotional closeness (50%), followed by economic factors and family/customary pressure (20% each), and pregnancy outside marriage (10%). In practice, women who undergo nyerod marriage mostly experience the stigma of "disgrace" from the community (40%), limitations on returning home (26%), loss of caste rights (20%), and restrictions on choosing a partner (14%). The social impacts felt included broken family relationships, different treatment in the community, psychological pressure, although some respondents stated that they did not experience significant impacts. Most Triwangsa women hoped for changes in customs that are more fair, recognition of women's rights, and socialization of gender equality in the community.

Table 7. Summary of Previous Research Related to Gender Bias in Nyerod Marriage

No	Title/Source	Type of Research	Main Findings	Comparison
1.	Pola Komunikasi Intrabudaya dan Perkawinan Nyerod dalam Masyarakat Hindu di Bali (Author: Limarandani Tahun 2023)	Qualitative	Nyerod marriage is closely related to social and cultural identity; traditional-religious relationships create power imbalances for women.	Similar to the current study, but emphasizes cultural aspects and traditional power in intra-cultural communication.
2.	Keabsahan Perkawinan Nyerod menurut Hukum Adat Bali (Author: Budiarsa Tahun 2019)	Normative and Empirical Qualitative	Nyerod marriage is considered legally valid under customary and state law, with social and economic factors as the causes.	More focused on legal aspects and customary procedures as a complement to understanding the legal context of nyerod marriage.
3.	Pengaruh Perkawinan Ngerorod terhadap Keberlanjutan Sistem Kasta di Bali (Author: Novita & Sulanggi Tahun 2025)	Normative Legal Research with Document and Related Literature Analysis	Nyerod marriage impacts societal views on caste and influences Bali's social structure and cultural identity.	Complementing the main research with an emphasis on the socio-structural impact of nyerod marriage on the caste system at large.

4.	Pernikahan Nyerod di Bali Menurut Perspektif Sastra Hindu (Author: Rista Tahun 2024)	Qualitative descriptive study of literature and literary works	Describes the social pressure and stigma faced by women in nyerod marriages through a literary perspective; highlights patriarchal norms that limit women's freedom.	Complements with a cultural and literary approach, enriching the analysis of cultural norms and social pressure on women.
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Based on the summary of the research in Table 7, similarities were found with a study by Limarandani et al. [3], which focused on the relationship between nyerod marriage and social-cultural identity as well as power inequality against women. From another perspective, this study places greater emphasis on personal factors such as love or emotional closeness, which have not been the focus of previous studies. Asatari et al. [8] research also discusses the legal aspects and customary procedures that complement this study in a legal context, but does not discuss women's experiences directly. Novita & Sulangi highlight the impact of nyerod on the sustainability of the caste system. This is in line with the findings of this study, which discusses the loss of caste rights and the resulting social impacts. However, the research discussed here is more detailed in uncovering everyday discrimination. The findings of Titisari et al. [9] research, through a literary approach, focus more on social pressure and patriarchal norms, which are reinforced in this study with quantitative and qualitative data from respondents. This study has limitations, mainly due to its short implementation time. As a result, the data collected only reflects the conditions and experiences in Banjar Village. Additionally, the small number of participants in this study means the results cannot be broadly applied to other areas or larger populations. Therefore, the findings should be seen as an initial overview that requires further exploration through follow-up research with a longer timeframe and more participants.

3.1 Triwangsa Women's Reasons for Performing Kawin Nyerod

This study reveals that the main reason Triwangsa women choose to do nyerod marriage is because of love or emotional closeness, which reaches 50% of the total respondents. This factor shows that although customs and social norms in Banjar are very strong and regulate people's lives, emotional aspects and personal relationships remain a major consideration in making marriage decisions. Not only that, around 20% of economic factors and pressure from their families and customs are the reasons for them to enter into nyerod marriages. Another 10% are caused by pregnancy outside of marriage. This shows that the decision to enter into a nyerod marriage is not only based on customary regulations, but is also influenced by the complex social and economic dynamics experienced by Triwangsa women. These findings align with research conducted by Margi, which revealed that arranged marriages occur due to emotional closeness, leading women to make such decisions despite being aware of the social and cultural risks they will face in the future. This study also highlights the importance of economic factors as the primary catalyst for women facing financial constraints and significant social pressure. This phenomenon shows that Triwangsa women are not only confronted with strict customary norms but also face social and economic barriers that influence their life choices.

This situation shows that the decision of Triwangsa women to enter into nyerod marriages is not solely influenced by a single factor but is the result of a complex interplay between personal feelings, economic burdens, social pressures, and prevailing customary regulations. This reflects that women are not passive participants in the social system but have the power

to make their own life decisions, even though their mobility is restricted by patriarchal customary regulations [10]. Among the many cases in Bali, nyerod marriage has become one of the conscious choices made to gain the freedom to choose and determine one's partner, despite the significant social risks that may arise in the future. This situation highlights the importance of adopting a more humane and equitable approach to understanding the dynamics of traditional marriage. Women in Triwangsa need space and support to make decisions without being bound by values that are detrimental to them. Therefore, dialogue between tradition and social reality must be aligned so that the cultural system continues to evolve in harmony with the values of justice and gender equality.

3.2 Forms of Gender Bias Experienced

The results of this discussion reflect that Triwangsa women who enter into nyerod marriages face complex gender barriers and biases that significantly impact their social lives. Based on the results of the questionnaire distributed, 40% of respondents experienced the stigma of "shame," which is considered social discrimination that can harm the victim. This stigma not only tarnishes one's reputation but can also lead to exclusion from certain groups. This is also evidenced by the fact that 25% of respondents experienced limitations in returning to their original homes, which, from a psychological perspective, can lead to the loss of support from their immediate family. Additionally, approximately 20% of respondents also stated that they lost their caste rights, which had been tied to their social identity. This means that, according to custom, they are considered to have "lost their caste" and lost the social status they previously held" Finally, 15% of women experienced restrictions in choosing a spouse, indicating strict social control over women's freedom to determine their personal lives.

Triwangsa women who marry lower caste men will experience caste downgrading and receive severe social sanctions, including ostracization and negative stigma from the community. Research conducted by Yuliantari et al. [11] also confirms that the caste system in Bali, although changing, still maintains a very hierarchical and patriarchal social structure. In this structure, men have a dominant role in determining the social status of the family and offspring so that women are vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion because they marry men who are considered socially inferior. Bali's patrilineal social structure, which places lineage and status inheritance through men, reinforces male dominance and weakens women's position in society. This causes gender discrimination to become systemic and difficult to change without deep social intervention, whether through education, changes in social norms, or legal and customary reforms. This opinion is supported by several studies that reflect that patriarchy and a rigid caste system not only limit women's freedom but also reinforce gender inequality rooted in the social and cultural structures of Balinese society [8].

3.3 Social Consequences of Nyerod Marriage

This article states that the most dominant social consequence felt by Triwangsa women is the strained family relationships, as shown by the accumulated research results of 25%. This highlights the emotional and physical distance between them and their families after deciding to enter into a nyerod marriage. Additionally, 25% of Triwangsa women also experience different treatment from society, such as being ostracized and treated unfairly. 20% of respondents also revealed that they experience psychological pressure (anxiety caused by family pressure or negative societal views). Of course, where there are drawbacks, there are also advantages. Approximately 30% of respondents stated that they did not feel significant impacts after undergoing a nyerod marriage. Research conducted by Muti'ah also confirms the psychological phenomena experienced by women in arranged marriages.

Muti'ah noted that women who enter into arranged marriages often face significant social pressure due to their marital status being perceived as “lowering their social status”. This phenomenon not only creates tension within family relationships but also impacts the mental health of women, who require special support from family, society, and the government. Therefore, policies from relevant parties are needed to provide adequate psychological support, such as support groups, counseling, and community awareness education, to help women cope with the stigma and social pressure they experience [5].

3.4 Factors Causing Gender Bias in Kawin Nyerod

The caste system, combined with a patrilineal social structure, remains one of the main aspects that perpetuates gender bias, especially for women. The decision to marry outside one's caste for Triwangsa women who marry men of a lower caste not only triggers social pressure but also traditional consequences such as “caste downgrading,” meaning they lose the social and cultural rights they previously held, such as the right to participate in certain religious ceremonies, inheritance rights, and recognition within the social structure of the community. According to research conducted by Titisari et al. [9], despite the legal abolition of caste marriage restrictions, customary practices continue to perpetuate such discrimination. One example is the continuation of the patiwangi ceremony, which is a spiritual cleansing ritual that actually reinforces the negative stigma against Triwangsa women who marry men of a lower caste. This ceremony is often interpreted as a symbolic severing of ties between the woman and her family, thereby further reinforcing the subordinate position of women within the patriarchal customary structure.

From another perspective, the social structure that places men as the heirs of rights and lineage also makes women seen as mere accessories in the family. This results in women becoming highly dependent on men's decisions, both within the family and in the broader community. In this context, women do not have equal space to determine the direction of their lives, as everything is governed by structures that favor men. This situation shows that despite formal legal advances, such as the abolition of the ban on inter-caste marriages in state law, it has not been able to penetrate the thick walls built by entrenched patriarchal customs and norms. Women remain the most vulnerable to injustice, not only because of the rules as written, but also because of the value systems and culture that still limit their space and life choices. Therefore, comprehensive and progressive change is needed, not only through legal reform, but also through cultural education, intergenerational dialogue, and public awareness about the importance of gender equality and respect for women's rights in various aspects of life.

3.4.1 Expectations from the Community

"We want a custom that does not make us feel inferior and marginalized, so that we can live with the same dignity and rights as other men and women. With that, we hope that customs will become a source of strength rather than a burden, so that we can contribute fully to both our families and society without losing the identity that has been inherent in us since birth."

This statement certainly reflects the desire of Triwangsa women to be treated fairly within the traditional system without limiting their freedom of movement. The hope expressed is not merely a demand for the elimination of discrimination, but a desire for traditions to continue to evolve into a means of empowerment, providing space for women and enabling them to live with dignity, strength, and respect [6,12]

Despite facing negative stigma and limitations in accessing the rights they should have, many Triwangsa women demonstrate resilience and optimism. They continue to build

solidarity networks and fight for their rights slowly but consistently. This courageous struggle reflects a positive attitude that serves as an important foundation for fostering a more inclusive culture and achieving gender equality by blending traditional values with modern humanity. Many of them choose to voice their opinions through discussion forums, whether in non-formal education, communities, or advocacy efforts that open spaces for dialogue between tradition and human rights.

4 Conclusion

This study concludes that the nyered marriage system in Banjar Village, Buleleng Regency, continues to perpetuate gender discrimination that disproportionately disadvantages Triwangsa women, thereby fulfilling the research objective of examining manifestations of gender injustice in customary marriage practices. The findings reveal that while love and emotional closeness are primary motivations for entering into nyered marriages, coercion linked to economic pressures also plays a role. In practice, women experience stigma as a “disgrace,” loss of caste rights, restricted partner choice, and strained family relationships, which contribute to psychological trauma and social marginalization. At the same time, some women demonstrate resilience by sustaining peaceful family lives and drawing on community support, signaling aspirations for more equitable traditions. Theoretically, the study underscores the intersection of patriarchal norms and women’s agency within Balinese marriage customs. Practically, it recommends cultural mediation, advocacy, and awareness-raising initiatives to challenge discriminatory norms and promote women’s rights in customary law. Future research should explore longitudinal changes in women’s experiences, conduct comparative studies across different regions, and examine the role of education in transforming perceptions toward gender equality in Balinese marriage systems.

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