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# Gender equality from the perspective of Minahasa ethnicity and Christian religious education



**Author:**  
Djoys A. Rantung<sup>1</sup>

**Affiliation:**  
<sup>1</sup>Post Graduated Department,  
Faculty of Christian Religious  
Studies, Universitas Kristen  
Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

**Corresponding author:**  
Djoys Rantung,  
djoysrantung01@gmail.com

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Gender equality continues to be a topic of ongoing public concern, with various alternatives proposed to achieve the ideal gender equality. Despite the utilisation of various references, the desired outcomes have yet to be realised. Local traditions in Minahasa and Christian religious education (CRE) in Indonesia offer constructive alternatives for gender equality efforts. While the political, religious and social spheres have not strongly supported gender equality, Minahasan culture and philosophy have long advocated for gender equality. Using a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis, this study draws references from various books and articles to construct the idea of gender equality from the local context of Minahasa. In conclusion, the historical origins of Minahasa, traditions of leadership such as tonaas and walian, as well as the philosophy of equality in life and CRE, contribute to the values of gender equality.

**Contribution:** This research presents the idea of gender equality drawn from the local values of Minahasa and CRE in Indonesia. Thus, the cultural-educational perspective can significantly impact social life and help combat gender discrimination.

**Keywords:** women; gender equality; Minahasa; Christian religious education; Indonesia.

## Introduction

Although there has been progress in efforts to achieve gender equality, this issue remains a significant challenge worldwide, including in Indonesia. In a global context, Alexandra Girard (2015) reported that the existence of female leaders in India is still a question mark because they actually do not have full authority. In the Arab world, Kamer Koburtay & Abuhusein (2021), argues that women experience social suffering because of religious prejudices and local cultural contexts. The military in Sweden has opened up space for the acceptance of female military members, but there are some obstacles in its implementation, such as different admission standards between males and females (Alvinus, Krekula & Larsson 2018). In various sectors of public life in Africa, women are 'screaming' and 'weeping' for themselves because discrimination is still felt (King, Edwards & Watling 2023). Academic reports in various journals offer a large number of references related to gender equality issues, most of which disadvantage women. This issue even becomes the subject of debate from national, religious and cultural perspectives.

Furthermore, despite the advocacy for gender equality in Christian religious education (CRE) in Indonesia, its implementation still faces various serious challenges. For example, Rustan Mardiah, Kharis & Sholihah (2019) reports that discrimination against women is a problem that often occurs in almost all layers of society. The reason is quite clear: society has not been able to free itself from a patriarchal culture that has bound and forced women under the power of men for thousands of years. Yuni Sulistyowati (2020) even adds that the underlying reason for gender inequality is the lingering patriarchal ideology that views men as dominant and sidelines the role of women in the social order. Starting from the perception that women are only prepared to be household heads, placing women as marginalised and subordinate. Women become targets of violence and social harassment, being considered weak and powerless. Freedom to obtain the education, which is guaranteed by the government, remains a dream for lower economic class layers. Domestic violence often occurs, with women being subjected to violence and silenced from voicing it to the public. Incorrect parenting patterns can result in the creation of gender-biased generations within the social fabric of society.

Specifically, Indonesia has a rich history and culture, yet gender disparities remain evident in various sectors of life. In the workplace, the wage gap between men and women persists, as does representation in leadership positions (Sulistyo et al. 2023). Additionally, social norms and gender

stereotypes often hinder efforts to combat inequality. At the education level, some regions still face challenges in ensuring equal access to education for girls and boys (Efendy 2021). Gender-based violence issues also remain in the spotlight, with high levels of violence against women requiring serious attention from the government and society (Perempuan 2020). In this context, steps towards gender equality require not only policy changes but also cultural and social norm transformations or perhaps a return to the original values of Indonesian society. By continuing to raise awareness, provide education and garner support from the community, it is hoped that Indonesia can achieve more inclusive and fair gender equality.

Several cultural backgrounds in the archipelago prioritise gender equality in the public sphere. For example, indigenous traditions in Minahasa demonstrate the absence of gender dichotomy, emphasising equal roles between men and women. In the values of life and history of Minahasa society, women are valued and given roles equal to men. The concept of gender equality is reflected in various aspects of daily life and customs of the Minahasa community.

The role of women in the daily life of Minahasa society encompasses various fields, including leadership roles in agriculture, religion and even being considered as the ancestors of the community. Some studies have been conducted on the issue of Minahasan women. The presence of these traditions and values indicates the existence of an inclusive social system, where women's contributions are recognised and valued (Angkouw 2018; Bentian 2015; Ponto, Tampake & Lauterboom 2024). The origin stories of the local community do not emphasise striking gender dichotomies. Instead, women's involvement in the historical process and formation of Minahasa society is considered an integral part of the overall narrative. Furthermore, in the philosophy of community life, the importance of equality in Minahasa society reflects values that emphasise equality and the active participation of both genders in building and maintaining the community. Overall, Minahasa's traditions and history provide a positive example of how communities can live harmoniously without gender dichotomies that create inequality.

Therefore, while gender equality issues continue to be a never-ending topic of global and national discussion, Minahasa traditions and Christian Education offer alternative perspectives on the equality of gender roles. This is because both Minahasa values and Christian education emphasise the absence of gender dichotomy in the public sphere. Based on this thesis statement, **the research question posed in this article is, what can be learned from** Minahasa traditions and CRE that can contribute to strengthening gender equality? To address the research question, this article will first explore the historical origins of Minahasa society, attributed to a woman named Karema. The subsequent section will examine the tradition of tonass and walian leadership, which frequently includes women. Additionally, a philosophy of local community life will be presented and expanded upon to

demonstrate the profound wisdom of Minahasa culture in relation to gender equality. Finally, the values of CRE will be suggested as a benchmark for achieving gender equality in Indonesia.

## Discussion

### Karema: The history of Minahasa's origin woman

The origin history of the Minahasa ancestors portrays feminist facts where women have a central role in local history. There are various versions that are an integral part of the oral and written heritage obtained from various sources regarding the origin of the Minahasa people. In this article, the main sources are taken from female writers such as Marhaeni Luciana Mawuntu and Perry Rumengan (Mawuntu 2017; Rumengan & Hartati 2023). One popular version among the Minahasa people is the story written by Western writers, missionaries and representatives of the Dutch colonial government. This version tells that the ancestors of Minahasa were women from the Indo-Mongoloid or South China. Some versions mention that this woman was a princess from China who was exiled for violating the king's rules and stranded in the land of Minahasa. In these versions, the old woman accompanying this woman is later known as Karema. This story also includes mythological and legendary aspects that provide an insight into the origin of the Minahasa society. However, these versions not only tell about Lumimuut but also about the old woman later known as Karema. Although these versions provide interesting insights, their historical truth is still debated. This story is an integral part of the oral and written heritage obtained from various sources but remains the subject of research and ongoing debate. However, this version emphasises that in Minahasa myths, women, Karema and Lumimuut are central female figures in the origin of the local community. The Minahasa people place great emphasis on gender equality. This raises the question: is this belief rooted in their recognition of the important roles played by their female ancestors?

On the other hand, there is another version of the story regarding the origin of the Minahasa people. This version is derived from the words of the elderly and cultural Symbols and/or image found in waruga (stone sarcophagi) and village foundation stones. This version narrates that the ancestors of the Minahasa people came from two groups, namely those originating from the mainland of Sulawesi and those from outside Sulawesi. These two groups then merged and formed the Minahasa tribe. In this version, there are no stories about Lumimuut or Karema as in the first version. However, the symbols and images found in waruga and village foundation stones provide clues about the origins of the Minahasa people's ancestors. These symbols and images encompass mythological and legendary aspects that provide insight into the origin of the Minahasa community. Although this second version lacks clear written records, the symbols and images provide clues about the origins of the Minahasa people's ancestors. Thus, the history of the origins of the

Minahasa people's ancestors is an integral part of the Minahasa people's identity and cultural heritage yet remains a subject of research and ongoing debate.

The third version regarding the origins of the Minahasa people recounts that Karema, Lumimuut and Toar were not the first people in the land of Minahasa, but rather they were survivors of a great flood that struck the land. In this version, these three figures are portrayed as the ancestors of all taranak (descendants) in Minahasa. This version predates the first or mission version, yet Marhaeni Mawuntu suspects that the narrative referring to Karema, Lumimuut and Toar underwent changes because of encounters with foreign nations that came to the land of Minahasa. In other words, the third version is constructed in such a way as to meet the need for ancestral figures after encountering other values, including ancestral stories from immigrants. Although this third version differs from the first and second versions, the story remains an integral part of the oral and written heritage obtained from various sources. The history of the origins of the Minahasa people's ancestors continues to be a subject of research and ongoing debate yet remains an important part of the identity and cultural heritage of the Minahasa people (Mawuntu 2017).

From the various versions available, despite limitations in information, at the very least, the female figures Karema and Lumimuut reappear in this third version. Therefore, it is difficult to refute that the original tradition of Minahasa prioritises gender equality. Even in the records of the local community's original traditions, women are central figures, emphasising the absence of any superiority of men over women. From a gender perspective, all humans are regarded as equal. This philosophy is further emphasised in the concluding part of this article, which delves into the values of the local community.

As additional supporting data, Perry Rumengan and Dinar Sri Hartati (2023) explored the origins of the Minahasa community using an ethnomusicological approach. They utilised the old documentation of Van Kol to unveil the history. In their discussion, it was revealed that Karema, considered a goddess, and even to this day still practised by the tonaas when leading a ritual, always pays homage to Karema, who is considered the original ancestor of Minahasa. In the Karema Song documented by Van Kol, Dewi Karema is depicted as a woman of extraordinary beauty and possesses immense magical power. She is regarded as the protective goddess and guardian of Minahasa community life. Dewi Karema is portrayed as a very strong and brave figure. She is capable of defeating her enemies with her extraordinary magical power. Additionally, she is also considered a very wise figure with high wisdom. She often provides advice and guidance to the Minahasa community in facing various problems and challenges in their lives.

In the documentation of the song by Van Kol, it is revealed that Dewi Karema is the origin of the ancestors of the Minahasa community. She originated from China and

arrived in Minahasa accidentally because of the evacuation from the war that struck the Three Kingdoms during the Han Dynasty around the 3rd century. Dewi Karema's arrival is considered a blessing and a gift to the Minahasa community because she brought wisdom, strength and courage greatly needed in facing various problems and challenges in their lives. In Minahasa mythology, Dewi Karema is considered a very important and respected figure by the Minahasa community. She is regarded as the protector and guardian of Minahasa community life. Therefore, the Minahasa community often performs rituals and ceremonies to worship and honour Dewi Karema as a form of respect and gratitude for her presence.

Based on information about Karema as a female figure in the origin of the Minahasa community, the values contained in this tradition can provide positive inspiration regarding gender equality. Including the theme of gender equality in the public sphere in Indonesia is an important step in creating an inclusive and fair environment for all. The Minahasa community, which honours women or emphasises gender equality, can serve as an inspirational example. Recognition of the role of women in local origins and myths reflects the importance of women's contributions to shaping and sustaining society. Bringing the theme of gender equality into the public sphere can promote community awareness of the importance of respecting and recognising the rights and roles of every individual, regardless of gender. Educational initiatives, promotion of equality in policies and empowerment of women in various sectors are efforts that can be taken to realise these values of equality.

#### Minahasa leadership: Walian and Tonaas

In previous studies, I have discussed the philosophy of leadership in Minahasa but from the perspective of religion and education: 'Contextualization Towards Cooperative-Reflective Inculturation, Mapalus Cultural Values, and State Leader Philosophy in Minahasa' and 'Acculturation of Transformational Leadership of Paulus and State Leader Philosophy in Minahasa' (Rumbay, Hutagalung & Sagala 2023; Rumbay et al. 2022). Both writings can serve as primary references in building arguments in this study where the concepts of walian and tonaas will be explored but from the perspective of gender equality.

Leadership models like tonaas in Minahasa reflect diversity and inclusivity in traditional leadership concepts. Tonaas are regarded as powerful by the community because they possess various skills in the public sphere such as healing diseases, interpreting bird sounds, reading signs in the sky, hunting, clearing new land, fighting, making medicine and more. Etymologically, tonaas comes from the word 'tou', meaning human, and 'taas', taken from the term for the hard middle part of the wood. So tonaas is a person who is tough or strong intellectually, emotionally and mentally. What is interesting is that there are many Minahasa women who become tonaas. For example, when I had health problems and was in the village of Lobu, Southeast Minahasa, there

was a woman referred to as tonaas because she had the ability to massage and provide healing for various health issues. Tonaas like this exists not only in Lobu but also in various other places and throughout different times. The presence of women as tonaas indicates that in the Minahasa society structure, women have important roles in various fields, including those related to specialised skills respected and deemed beneficial by the community.

The importance of women as tonaas highlights the diversity of gender roles and contributions within Minahasa society. This reflects acceptance of female leadership in various contexts, including spiritual realms, traditional healing and natural knowledge. Thus, this tradition can serve as an inspirational example for efforts to promote gender equality and empower women across different layers of society. Understanding and respecting the diversity of leadership models like tonaas is a crucial step in building an inclusive society that acknowledges the value of each individual's contributions, regardless of gender.

In addition to tonaas, the walian leadership model often held by women in Minahasa demonstrates that local traditions and culture give significant roles to women in the spiritual and religious aspects. Even Karema being regarded as the first walian provides an insight that women are respected and acknowledged in spiritual and ritual leadership. In many cultures, women often have strong roles in spiritual and religious endeavours. They may serve as tradition keepers, ritual leaders or revered spiritual figures. The presence of women as walian indicates that the Minahasa community recognises the wisdom and capacity of women to lead in these aspects.

Documentation from Leiden University in the Netherlands shows the oldest image where a female walian believed to be from the village of Sonder in Minahasa is depicted. Leadership models like walian held by women can serve as inspiration and positive examples for communities in various places to involve women in religious and spiritual contexts. This also reflects the values of gender equality and recognition of women's contributions in various dimensions of community life. In contrast to some religious traditions in Indonesia such as Islam and Christianity that have not yet provided space for women in the spiritual realm.

There are various interpretations and implementations of Islam worldwide regarding the role of women in the religious and spiritual sphere. Islam, as a religion, has universal teachings, and the interpretation and application of these teachings can vary across cultures and societies. Some communities or countries that adopt conservative interpretations of Islam may impose limitations or restrictions on women's involvement in various aspects of life, including in the public sphere, the workforce or political life. However, it is important to remember that these are specific interpretations and implementations and do not reflect the entire spectrum of understanding of Islam.

Theological understanding of a religion cannot be addressed in this text. The concepts of the profane and sacred, as well as the divine and secular, cannot be directly compared. However, the text can at least demonstrate that gender equality issues still persist. For example, a preacher or cleric must be a male. Then there is a separation in the context of Islamic worship. And various other religious rules that give the impression of gender differentiation. Indeed, some writings have tried to provide neutrality towards the roles of women and men from the Islamic perspective, as Ismiyati Muhammad (2019) and Dwi Juwita (2018) emphasise that there is no prohibition for women to pursue a career in Islam. Then there are efforts to reinterpret rigid Islamic texts or traditions regarding gender equality. Yogi Sidiq & Erihadiana (2022) discuss gender equality that provides hope for Muslim women. Lift Ma'shumah (2012) conducted a methodological study of Muslim feminist views on leadership. Hafisah (2021) then specifically discusses Islamic views on gender, and Zainal Abidin (2017) discusses gender equality and women's emancipation in Islamic education. However, gender equality issues still leave a lot of work for religions in Indonesia.

Many scholars and women activists in the Muslim world are striving to understand Islam's teachings in an inclusive and progressive manner, promoting gender equality and addressing practices that may hinder women's involvement. Women's roles in Islamic history also include significant contributions in education, arts and social spheres. Therefore, it is important to understand the diversity of perspectives within the Islamic world and acknowledge that there are various understandings and interpretations of Islamic teachings. Open discussions and dialogues among various Islamic communities and thinkers can help understand different perspectives and seek common ground on issues such as gender equality.

Not only in Islamic tradition, issues regarding women's roles in the church, including questions about whether women can become pastors or priests, remain a controversial topic in Christian theology. Views on this issue vary among different denominations and theological traditions. Some Christian denominations fully support women's participation in the ministry and understand that Christian teachings should not limit women's roles in church service. On the other hand, there are denominations or theological groups that uphold more traditional views and restrict certain roles in the church only to men.

Yuli Rafika (2018) conducted research in the Protestant Batak Christian Church and found that the rejection of women as leaders or pastors is still ongoing. Similarly, the service and leadership of female pastors in BNKP are still strongly opposed (Dachi & Manao, 2021). On the other hand, there have been theological and academic efforts to elevate women to higher positions to avoid gender inequality in church environments. Jusni Saragih, Lolo & Pranoto (2019) proposed a more welcoming approach for churches to accept women as leaders. Even Sapto Sunariyanti and I Made Priana (2023)

provide a specific perspective on how women as leaders and pastors relate to patriarchal environments.

It is important to remember that many of these debates are influenced by interpretations of scriptures, especially certain passages related to the role of women in the church. Additionally, cultural shifts and social values also play a role in the evolution of views on gender issues in the context of church life. These debates demonstrate the diversity of perspectives within the Christian community and how various communities respond to specific theological and ethical issues. While some denominations have opened doors to the active participation of women in church leadership, challenges and debates on this issue continue in various Christian communities worldwide.

Although some religious traditions in Indonesia have not strongly advocated for gender equality, particularly in religious spaces, and while there are certainly various interpretations, the leadership roles of tonaas and walian in Minahasa held by women reflect important ideas about gender equality in local traditions. This indicates that the Minahasa community values and trusts women to lead in religious and spiritual contexts.

This tradition not only reflects women's participation in spiritual capacities but also advocates the idea that both women and men can contribute significantly to important aspects of community life. Understanding and honoring women's roles in traditional leadership creates space for empowerment and gender equality within society. Through leadership traditions such as tonaas and walian, Minahasa makes a positive contribution to raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and provides an inspirational example for communities elsewhere. This also supports efforts to achieve gender equality at a broader level and stimulates dialogue about women's roles in leadership across various sectors of life.

#### **Esa Cita Waya, Cawana se Parukuan, Cawana se Pakuruan**

'Esa Cita Waya, Cawana Se Pakuruan, Cawana Se Parukuan' is a philosophy reflecting the principles of equality and justice in Minahasa society. This philosophy states that all individuals are considered equal, without any differences in levels or hierarchies. In other words, no one is considered higher or lower, and no one should worship or be worshipped by others. In the contemporary context, a more well-known motto is 'torang samua basudara (Pangalila, Rotty & Rumbay 2024)'. 'Esa Cita Waya' emphasises unity and solidarity among the Minahasa community, where each individual is valued and considered equal in their contribution to the community. 'Cawana Se Pakuruan' and 'Cawana Se Parukuan' indicate that there is no caste or hierarchical structure that distinguishes one individual from another. Everyone is considered to have the same rights and responsibilities. This philosophy reflects egalitarian values and inclusive attitudes inherent in Minahasa culture,

emphasising the importance of respecting each other regardless of gender, social status or other backgrounds. Through 'Esa Cita Waya, Cawana Se Pakuruan, Cawana Se Parukuan', the Minahasa community builds a cultural foundation that values equality, justice and unity.

This philosophy had a significant impact on the efforts of European newcomers, such as Spain and the Netherlands, to enslave the Minahasa community. For example, Pastor Blas Palomino from Spain was killed in an incident that occurred when he met with the inhabitants of Kema Minahasa around 1619. According to the records of Pastor Pedro de la Concepcion, their group was attacked with spears by the inhabitants, and Pastor Blas Palomino was killed in the incident (Mawuntu 2017:97-99). This incident could indicate how the local community was unwilling to be treated differently from the newcomers. Equality in the social order is essential.

The egalitarian philosophy creates its own challenges for colonialism's efforts of colonisation or forced labour, which are often implemented by European colonial powers. European newcomers often use strategies of suppression and coercion to dominate and exploit indigenous communities. However, in the context of Minahasa, this philosophy of equality acts as a barrier to colonisation efforts. A society that regards everyone as equal tends to reject and resist practices that exploit or degrade individual dignity.

The egalitarian stance of the Minahasa community can result in strong resistance against colonial efforts to enslave the local population. The principles of equality and unity in this philosophy serve as pillars of strength in preserving the freedom and dignity of the Minahasa community. Thus, the philosophy of 'Esa Cita Waya, Cawana Se Pakuruan, Cawana Se Parukuan' not only reflects strong local values of equality but also acts as a defence against colonial attempts to replace egalitarian principles with harmful hierarchical systems. Therefore, in addition to Western countries facing their own challenges regarding oppression, the Minahasa community greatly emphasises gender equality between men and women.

Minahasa has produced important female figures who have played significant roles in the development of Indonesia. For example, Maria Walanda Maramis, born on 11 October 1887, in Manado, was the first female figure to be involved in Indonesian politics. Khairul Tri Anjani authored a recent article specifically discussing the background of Maria Walanda Maramis (Anjani, 2019). In his report, Khairul mentioned that Maria Walanda Maramis was active in the women's movement and was known as a member of the Volksraad (People's Council) during the colonial era. She advocated for women's rights, education and community welfare. Maria Walanda Maramis played an important role in the development of Indonesia, particularly in the context of the women's movement and politics in the early 20th century. Other records indicate that Maria Walanda Maramis became a member of the Volksraad in 1935. As a member of

this council, she advocated for political rights and the welfare of the Minahasa and Indonesian communities as a whole. Her involvement in the Volksraad reflects her significant political role.

In addition to advocating for women's rights, she also supported Indonesia's struggle for independence. She contributed to creating awareness of nationalism and political rights for the Indonesian nation. Her involvement in politics reached its peak during the period when Indonesia entered its independence era. Maria Walanda Maramis was also known as an educator and writer. She played a role in voicing thoughts and views on social and political issues through her writings. She considered education as a means to awaken consciousness and develop the capacity of society. In recognition of her contributions, she is honoured as one of Indonesia's national heroes. Her legacy and thoughts are still valued and serve as inspiration in efforts to achieve equality and prosperity in Indonesia. With her multifaceted role, she made meaningful contributions to advancing women's rights and supporting Indonesia's development towards independence and progress, making her an important national figure for Indonesia's independence and women's emancipation from the East.

In addition, there are more modern female figures. Jeanne Mandagi became the first female General in Indonesia, receiving a two-star General title on 13 August 2021. She played a crucial role in demonstrating that women are capable and qualified to reach high positions in the Indonesian military. Jeanne Mandagi has had a distinguished career and serves as an inspiration for women in the military field. Then there is Sientje Adam, who was a speaker at the Indonesian Youth Congress in 1926 from Minahasa. Furthermore, Augustine Magdalena Waworuntu, affectionately called Tiene, is a highly significant figure in the history of local government in Indonesia, particularly in Manado as the first female mayor in Indonesia. Her selection and appointment as the mayor of Manado in late 1949 and her official inauguration in March 1950 demonstrate that she was the first female mayor in Indonesia.

The achievements of Tiene Waworuntu reflect positive developments in empowering women in the political sphere at that time. The participation and leadership of women in local government are significant steps towards gender equality. Certainly, the documentation and recognition of the contributions of figures like Augustine Magdalena Waworuntu are important to investigate and immortalise in history. This information constitutes a crucial part of the narrative reflecting the political and social evolution in Indonesia. However, these facts ensure that in the history of Minahasa, the philosophy of gender equality has, directly and indirectly, influenced a more balanced role for women alongside men in the public sphere.

### Christian religious education and gender equality

Daud Pandie (2024) reveals that Bible-based CRE provides a perspective that acknowledges and respects the essence and

role of women in society. Efforts to place women in positions equal to men need to be continuously carried out in every CRE learning so that the planting of scriptural values that recognise and honour women is implemented in community life. Yuni Zega (2021) reinforces Pandie's view by asserting that gender is a characteristic that can be exchanged between each other and can be possessed by both. God distinguishes between human genders but does not differentiate roles between them. Thus, CRE plays a crucial role in building an understanding of gender equality within the family and society, especially in the field of education, and in the church.

Gender equality in the Bible leads to the Christian view of how to promote women to achieve gender equality themselves. In Genesis 1:27, it is clearly stated that 'So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them', meaning that God created men and women with equal status and in the image of God. It is also explained that humans have the same essence as God, that God created men and women as noble, rational and holy beings, so that humans can communicate with God and are worthy to fulfil the mandate given by God as leaders over all of God's creations on earth. So it can be concluded that men and women are equally given the freedom and power to identify themselves in society. In Galatians 3:28, it is said that 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. This verse in the New Testament is seen as liberating women from oppression. Furthermore, there are also parts of the Bible that speak about gender equality, namely in Genesis 34:12; Exodus 21:7; Leviticus 12:1-5; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Samuel 18:25; Nehemiah 6:14.

These verses clearly show that men and women have equal social status. In the New Testament, it can also be seen from the life of Jesus that discrimination against men and women still existed. When Jesus began His ministry, He opposed the discrimination and domination that occurred in His time. In John 8:2-11, it is said that when the Jewish leaders brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, and they asked Jesus to judge this woman according to Jewish law, but Jesus did not care about their request. It can be understood that the discrimination that occurred was that they only caught the woman committing adultery but did not catch the man committing adultery with her. So, Jesus firmly told them that 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her'. This statement can be explained that Jesus also rejected discrimination, meaning that the Bible highly values gender equality because God created men and women in His own image and likeness.

Therefore, schools serve as institutions for teaching students or developing competencies under the supervision of teachers with a formal and compulsory education system. Through schools, students experience progress through learning activities. Christian religious education in schools plays an important and appropriate role in educating children

according to Christian values and local traditions in Minahasa to guide them and direct them to acquire maximum knowledge about gender equality. Christian religious education teachers have an essential role in teaching gender equality to young children in schools. In this regard, as CRE teachers, it is necessary to implement gender equality through: (1) learning activities, namely not segregating boys and girls during learning, (2) providing equal opportunities for expressing opinions and asking questions, (3) administering fair discipline to boys and girls, (4) granting rights and responsibilities to them fairly, (5) treating them equally in communication, meaning that teachers do not dominate communication with either boys or girls, (6) not restricting interactions between boys and girls at school and (7) ensuring that the number of students in the class is not dominated by one gender.

## Conclusion

The local traditions of Minahasa and CRE, which promote gender equality, can serve as constructive alternatives in our efforts to achieve gender equality. These traditions reflect principles of equality, such as the origin of Minahasa society, leadership by women as 'tonaas' and 'walian', and the philosophy of equality. These traditions are positive steps towards empowering women and recognising their contributions in various aspects of life. Additionally, the values of CRE, centred on the Bible, should be the main reference for teachers advocating for gender equality in Indonesia and globally.

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## Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

## Authors' contributions

D.A.R. declares that they are the sole author of this research article.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

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