



## Empowering Women: Family Life Education Program for Poverty Alleviation

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**Abstract:** The incidence of poverty in Indonesia has exhibited a marginal decrease, although it remains significantly distant from the desired objective and predominantly concentrated in rural regions. Efforts to reduce poverty should be optimized, particularly by prioritizing the economic empowerment of rural people and improving access to essential services. Poverty in Cianjur Regency, West Java Province, broadly impacted people's lives. Women in rural areas were a significantly affected group. It was among the five districts with the highest number of impoverished people in West Java. The study used secondary data analysis from 2005 to 2021 to understand poverty. This study employed a Concurrent Explanatory Design, which collected comprehensive interviews and statistical data. The researchers conducted interviews with the Head of the Neighborhood Association to gain insights into poverty at the local level. Additionally, they analyzed data from Statistics Indonesia on poverty, gender, and human development in Cianjur Regency from 2005 to 2021, spanning 16 years. The research sought to enhance comprehension of women's poverty in the region by integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Human development index levels were low in Cianjur Regency due to poor development and limited gender empowerment. On average, women in the region had only 5.75 years of education, equivalent to the primary school level. The Family Life Education program was needed to empower families through education and training that suited their needs in addressing this issue. Thus, it was expected to reduce poverty and improve the condition of women in the Cianjur District.

**Keywords:** FLE program, poverty, the woman

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has experienced moderate economic growth for most of the past 50 years (Hill, 2021). However, this country still faces many problems with poverty and unemployment. Both advanced and developing countries are particularly interested in this topic. When the COVID pandemic outbreak hit economies hard in 2020, GDP shrank by 5.3% in the second quarter, the worst recession since 1998 (Sparrow et al., 2020). According to a study estimating different economic contraction scenarios, COVID-19 significantly impacts global monetary poverty, causing around 100 million people to enter poverty in 2020 (World Bank, 2020; Sumner et al., 2020). Poverty is a global issue exacerbated by global inequalities, with the wealth of the world's wealthiest individuals increasing, highlighting the need for systemic changes to address poverty globally, particularly in advanced capitalist countries (Pulla et al., 2022; Gough & Eisenschitz, 2022). Economic growth measures a country's success and is necessary to reduce poverty. One of the parameters is effective economic growth. Therefore, the distribution of growth should cover all income groups, including people experiencing poverty. This parameter indicates that economic growth must occur in sectors involving many poor people, such as agricultural or labour-intensive sectors (Asrol & Ahmad, 2018). The poverty line, which excludes those earning below necessities, often fails to consider regional differences in living costs; as households below the line grow, the deeply poor may face material hardships, while the near poor experience more economic stability (Jensen, 2022; Parolin et al., 2023).

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. Poverty has many manifestations, including insufficient revenue and other productive resources for a stable life, starvation, and malnourishment. It also affects poor health, limited access to education and other essential services, homelessness, and inadequate housing. Indonesia's poverty rate has halved since 1993, but COVID-19 is expected to significantly impact it, potentially reducing economic growth and increasing poverty to 16.6% (Sparrow et al., 2020; Suryahadi et al., 2020). The economy stagnated for a long time in the late 20th century. There were very high infant mortality rates, and poverty and malnutrition were as prevalent as life expectancy in those under 50 (Hill, 2021). Prolonged poverty occurs when a person or group cannot reach the poverty line. Indonesia needs to expand its social protection programs to assist both new and existing poor. In 2021, the number of people living in poverty in Cianjur Regency reached 260,000 (Fadillah et al., 2022; BPS, 2022a), and this figure places it in the five districts with

the highest number of impoverished citizens in West Java (Gabrlin, 2021). The evidence when examining the contribution of intra-household inequality to poverty using traditional measures is striking that poverty increased from 14.3 to 23.5%, mainly driven by poverty among women (Betti et al., 2020). Feminization of poverty is a phenomenon in which women are disproportionately affected by poverty compared to men. Poverty rates, especially among women, have increased dramatically in some regions (4). The feminization of poverty is a global phenomenon and is more prominent in underdeveloped countries. Poverty can be feminized due to a lack of education and low-wage jobs (Udisi, 2021); climate change makes women more vulnerable to poverty and increases dependency on men (Arshad et al., 2022). This condition is also exacerbated by human trafficking (Schmidthorst, 2022). Thus, an effort is required to find a solution to alleviate poverty.

A strategic program designed to reduce poverty and improve all aspects of human development is the Family Life Education program. Family life education, or FLE, integrates preventative, educative, and collaborative approaches to individual and family problems instead of expecting to intervene until issues evolve and people suffer and struggle with their challenges (Darling et al., 2022). Family Life Education is a comprehensive and flexible subject; it involves activities that contribute to the total development and well-being of the family, such as physical, mental, emotional, economic, and spiritual. Thus, this study aims to analyze the portrait of poverty in the Cianjur Regency and how the Family Life Education program's role is to reduce women's position in poverty in rural areas.

Family life education (FLE) is a policy strategy in Pacific Island countries, aiming to provide age-appropriate, gender-sensitive information to adolescents and youth, promoting their health, well-being, dignity, respectful relationships, understanding of rights, communication skills, decision-making, and positive self-esteem (Samoa Youth Monograph, 2020). India faces a persistent poverty crisis, with millions living below the poverty line. Collaborating with NGO "Lay Counselor Training", Family Life Education can improve socioeconomic development, family resilience, and mental health (Carson & Chowdhury, 2018). The family life education model (FFLE) foundations illustrate FLE's core concepts and ten content areas, providing clarity, understanding, and opportunities for implementation and best practices (Darling et al., 2020). Despite the importance of empowering women, research on how family life education programs can contribute to this goal is shockingly limited. However, we can make a significant difference by developing a comprehensive family life education program that strengthens the overall independence of women. Our program will address essential areas such as education, finance, and women's roles and empower women to become more self-sufficient and confident. We want to break down existing barriers through our innovative program and empower women to achieve their full potential. Research on women's empowerment with family life education programs still needs to be completed. Thus, the research aims to develop a family life education program that is a strengthening solution for women to become more empowered and independent from education, finance, and women's roles.

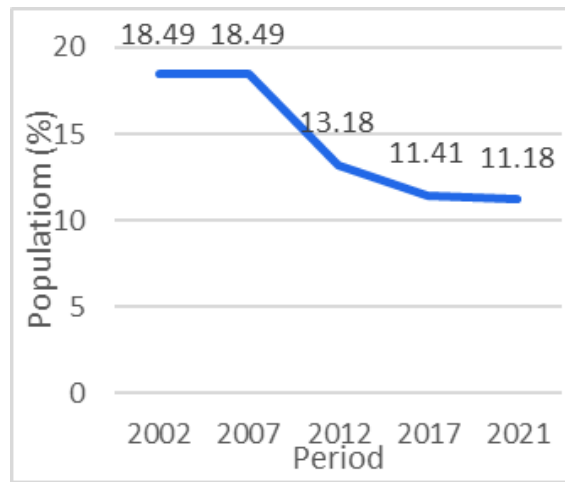
## **METHODS**

This study used a Concurrent Explanatory Design, which involved simultaneously collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data was obtained from an interview with an informant, one of the Heads of Neighborhood Associations, to help explain the poverty in the village he oversees. Quantitative data was obtained from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) publications as external data collected by organizations or institutions for public use. Data was collected from the website of the Central Bureau of Statistics of Cianjur Regency with predetermined indicators and periods to support information on women's poverty. The samples in this study are poverty, gender, and human development index (HDI) data from 2005 to 2021. Poverty data in Cianjur Regency, such as the Poverty Line (Rupiah) and the percentage of poor people in Cianjur Regency from 2005 to 2021 (BPS, 2022a). Gender data are calculated based on average years of schooling, gender development index, and gender empowerment index by sex. The data collection process starts with checking the BPS website, with the first step determining the type of data needed, searching for data on the website, downloading PDF and CSV data, processing data using the application, and analyzing it. Data processing is in the form of providing various types of data, such as statistical data, publications, and census data. Data was obtained from the BPS website: <https://www.bps.go.id/>. Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) data is generally considered reliable and valid. This data comes from official BPS publications. This portal uses three types of metadata: statistical activity metadata, statistical variable metadata, and statistical indicator metadata. The research instrument uses Microsoft Excel to process BPS secondary data, such as calculating the percentage of data from 2005 to 2021. The percentage of data processed is the number of poor people from 2012 - 2021, the percentage of the population on the poverty line from 2005-2021, the gender development index and gender empowerment index in 2010 - 2020, and the average length of schooling in Cianjur Regency in 2010 - 2020. The data analysis technique in this research is to make a graph of the trend in the percentage of the population over time. The interpretation of the results in this study explains the meaning and implications of calculating the percentage of poor people and the HDI value. The data analysis approach was carried out

using interviews, journal articles, and textbooks. Quantitative and qualitative data were combined to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. The data analysis in this study leads to the concept that family life education can solve poverty among women in the district of Cianjur.

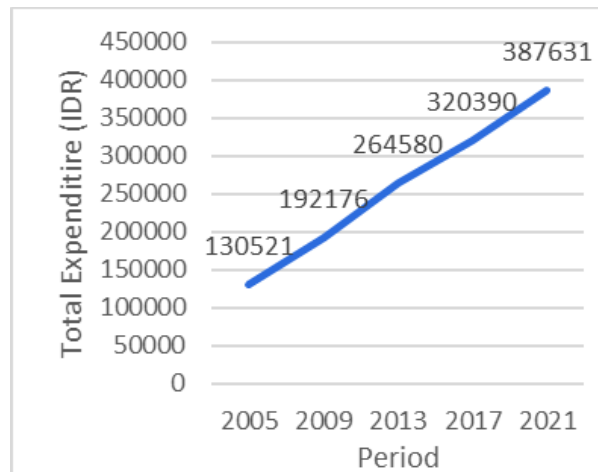
## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on an interview with the head of a neighborhood association in one of the villages in Cianjur district, the poverty rate in the village is high, with the majority of the population only earning a low income from farming or working as day laborers. The informant also stated that the lack of access to education and qualified skills significantly inhibits income generation. In addition, limited access to health care and high health costs also exacerbate poverty. This condition is reinforced by data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Cianjur Regency, that the number of poor people in Cianjur Regency in 2021 increased by 11.8 per cent or 260,200 people, compared to 2020, which was 10.36 per cent or 234,500 people (BPS, 2022b). However, the overall downward trend in poor people occurred in Cianjur Regency. The decline in poor people from 2002 to 2021 amounted to 7.31%, as shown in Figure 1.



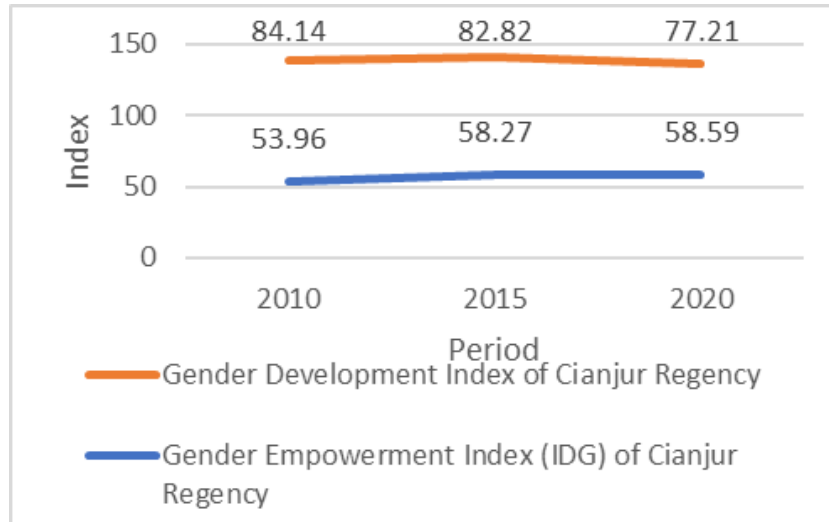
**Figure 1.** Percentage of Poor Population in Cianjur (Percent), 2012-2021

Poverty is one of the main problems in the economy because it concerns fulfilling basic needs so people can have a decent, healthier, and more sustainable life. Recognizing poverty's causes and consequences is essential in combating poverty (Nansadiqa et al., 2019). The poverty line is the nominal value needed to provide necessities, including food and non-food items. On its website, the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia released the poverty line threshold in March 2022, which increased by 4.0% to IDR 505,469 from IDR 486,168 in September 2021 (Badan Kebijakan Fiskal Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2022). Based on this approach, the poverty line in Regency Cianjur is considered relatively low because it is at IDR 387,631 compared to the threshold set. Although compared to 2012 with a figure of Rp. 250,032, over the past ten years, there has been an increasing trend in Cianjur Regency (Figure 2).



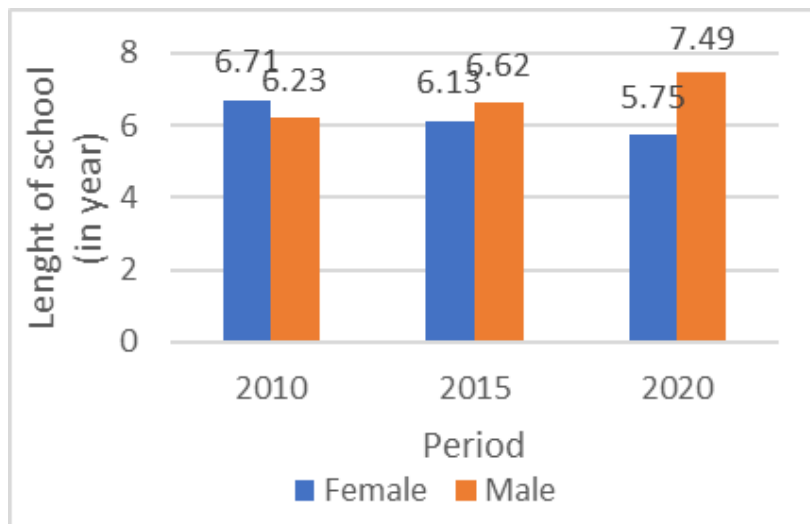
**Figure 2.** The Poverty Line in Cianjur 2005 – 2021

The Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) can describe gender-based human development. By using this index, it can be seen how much gender development has been achieved in Indonesia based on women's achievements in accessing basic capabilities and seeing the level of women's involvement in the decision-making process in the political and economic fields.



**Figure 3.** Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Index of Cianjur Regency, 2010 – 2020

Based on Figure 3, the GDI and GEI in the Cianjur district tend to have stable numbers. However, when compared over a decade, there is an increasing trend, although no sharp change exists. The overall gender development index is higher than the gender empowerment index (Figure 3). The Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) can describe gender-based human development. By using this index, it will be able to see how much the achievement of gender development in Indonesia is based on women's achievements in accessing basic capabilities and the level of women's engagement in the decision-making process of politics and the economy (Alfana et al., 2017). Average Years of Schooling or AYS can determine a region's community education level. The AYS in Cianjur Regency in 2020 was 7.95 years for the male population and 6.71 for females. This data implies that in Cianjur Regency, the education level of the male population aged 25 years and above is 7.49 years or equivalent to grade VII. In comparison, the average schooling level of the female population is 6.71 years or almost completed grade VII (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Average Length of School in Cianjur (Year), 2010 – 2020

Figure 4 indicates that the number of years of schooling of the female population in Cianjur Regency for the past decade has consistently been lower than that of the male population. This data indicates that women are more vulnerable to poverty due to a lack of social protection policies, especially in education, and investing in complementary development interventions is crucial for inclusive growth (Idrus & Rosida, 2020;

[Kuss et al., 2022](#)). Poverty and inequality in development are indivisible factors. Poverty occurs because of social disparities in a nation. Poverty levels negatively, environmental degradation, and income inequality leading to economic disparities are widely discussed and receive significant attention ([Ernawati, 2021](#); [Khan et al., 2022](#)). People living in famine routinely report that poverty requires decisions to address dietary, medical, and housing insecurity and that it has often led to outbreaks of disease flare-ups. Furthermore, they reported that exposure to violent crime in the surrounding neighborhood was a stress factor that aggravated disease activities ([Yelin et al., 2019](#)).

The evidence available indicates that the determinants of youth violence are comprehensive and interactive at various social system levels, including the numerous inequalities facing young adults in high-poverty and high-crime communities ([McCrea et al., 2019](#)). Developing countries, particularly Indonesia, also need to consider women's issues, which can contribute to poverty or GII (Gender et al.), commonly used to measure the magnitude of gender inequality. This rate includes three components: empowerment (women in Parliament), reproductive health (maternal mortality), as well as economic activities or access to equity and occupation ([Idrus & Rosida, 2020](#)).

Overcoming efforts to address this must use a multidisciplinary approach with an empowerment dimension. True empowerment should combine aspects of awareness, capacity building, and utilization. The factors needed to create such jobs include investment in labour-intensive industries, especially agriculture, promotion of a shift in the structure of employment towards more productive occupations and sectors, and improvement in the quality of employment in the informal economy, including remediation ([Omoniyi, 2013](#)). In addition, care must be taken to ensure that people experiencing poverty are equipped with the skills and assets they need to capitalize on their expanded employment potential. Regardless of their poverty risk level, the effects are vital, as high levels of unemployment lead to low income, which generates more poverty. According to [Hellwig and Marinova \(2022\)](#), the labour market has experienced significant changes, including the rise of non-standard employment and the working poor, making job security less predictive of economic well-being. Being unemployed and under-employed are the core of the poverty equation and the strongest predictor of impoverishment. The comparatively high level of unemployment with disparities in income equality between the regions, the index of rural poverty, the women at risk of poverty with low educational and healthcare quality, and other social concerns that affect the incidence of poverty ([Idrus & Rosida, 2020](#)).

Education plays an essential role in sustainable economic growth. A study in Burkina Faso found that education increases literacy, reducing poverty levels. However, paradoxically, education can also reduce active participation in the labour market. Therefore, policymakers in Burkina Faso should consider education and minimum wage reforms to enable the high-skilled labor force to participate in the local labor market ([Niankara & Traoret, 2019](#)). In addition, education also empowers individuals and communities to engage in poverty reduction programs, including those related to health. The Family Hope Program in Indonesia is a successful example of a partnership between the government, the private sector, and community development organizations. The program has successfully reduced poverty and improved health outcomes in Indonesia ([Tandos, 2019](#)). The families may be referred to customized services provided in their municipality (from poverty alleviation programs to childcare services, home visits, and housing), childcare services, home visits, home repairs, home improvements, or screening for developmental delays. Through families, efforts to alleviate poverty can be accomplished by collaborating with the government, the private sector, society, and the family. The objective of Family Life Education is to transform or modify the behavior of individuals through the absorption of new information, as well as training new skills in connecting and communicating more lovingly and effectively ([Carson & Chowdhury, 2018](#)).

Family life education, or FLE, integrates preventative, educative, and collaborative approaches to individual and family problems instead of expecting to intervene until issues evolve and people suffer and struggle with their challenges ([Darling et al., 2022](#)). The FLE aims to support individuals and families in understanding and developing human growth, development, and behavior within the family and throughout their life span. Experiential learning is intended to develop individuals' potential in their existing and prospective contributions as family members. The Family Life Education program developed to address poverty addresses the materials developed by [Carson and Chowdhury \(2018\)](#), which are displayed in [Table 1](#). Along with the support of the Family Life Education program, it is essential to involve the government, private sector, professionals, and the community at large to help families build understanding and skills that can help families, especially women, escape poverty. This strengthening is needed so that families can improve their standard of living.

**Table 1.** Family Life Education Contents and Practical Area with Potential to Influence the Reduction of Poverty

Issue	Family Life Education Area	Potential Impact
Gender inequality Education	Education on the disadvantages of gender inequality and the advantages of healthy functions and gender roles in the family.	More marital harmonious and collaborative partnerships between males and females in society support women's contribution to socioeconomic development.
Family and Community Economic Development/ small business promotion Education of both boys and girls and the elimination of forced child labour.	Family resource management; community and cooperative capacity building; microfinance opportunities Support and involvement of parents in children's education, and advantages for the family unit and child	Securing appropriate employment; income generation Higher employability when children reach adulthood; youth skills development
Unhygienic living conditions	Household Basic Science management and maintenance; an awareness of personal health and hygienic necessities and behaviors.	Improving the health of all the family members enhances work time and productivity.
Marital conflict and estrangement	Culturally appropriate marriage enrichment	Strong marriages/ stronger families

Gender inequality and injustice within families and society are the fundamental factors behind poverty. According to [Love et al. \(2024\)](#), low-income women face numerous obstacles in entrepreneurship, including limited education, childcare, financial resources, unjust legal treatment, and discriminatory gender roles and traditions. The imbalance in decision-making regarding household matters leads to suboptimal, inefficient, and ineffective outcomes due to disparities in time management, work distribution, and financial control among family members ([Asriani & Osira, 2019](#)). Empowering women through education and training is crucial for poverty combat and economic security; thus, the feminization of the labor force impacts income and opportunity disparities ([Sultan, 2018](#); [Hellwig & Marinova, 2023](#)).

In turn, it increases their opportunities for a better life and improved livelihoods, ultimately elevating the overall quality of life within rural families and communities. Rural women's access to resources like land, credit, training, and initiatives enhancing agricultural skills leads to increased income, food security, and economic autonomy ([Paul, 2024](#)). Cooperation between family life educators or specialists, as well as professional counselors and therapists, serves as the impetus for program development and implementation of training at various training sites ([Carson & Chowdhury, 2018](#)). Families who can develop the understanding and skills to move out of poverty will significantly help the country realize a prosperous society. Family well-being is rated higher than personal well-being in all four countries analyzed.

Women in Nigeria increasingly use mobile learning for family life education, demonstrating their support for national development ([Ajayi, 2023](#)). However, improvements include increased public awareness, functional literacy, and adequate data access. FLE, a Family Life Education (FLE) framework, addresses parenting challenges, social stress, and cultural influences in Ireland, promoting pro-social personhood, civility, and well-being ([O'Doherty & Jackson, 2023](#)). Women play a crucial role in the family, promoting reproductivity and fostering a supportive environment for family life education in Turkey ([Kaymakcioglu et al., 2023](#)). Family life education supports and develops service members, enhancing their quality of life. [Ogbari et al. \(2024\)](#) state that investing in women's education and skill development expands their economic opportunities and increases their ability to earn money, ultimately decreasing poverty. This study offers actionable strategies for developing other family life education programs ([O'Neal et al., 2023](#)). In pursuit of happiness, policymakers may need to analyze individual and family well-being ([Krys et al., 2021](#)). Considering the findings indicating backlash consequences, governments should take into consideration measures to safeguard women from crime and violence both in their homes and workplaces ([Balasubramanian et al., 2024](#)).

## CONCLUSION

Poverty is a multidimensional problem that is challenging to overcome. Many developing countries like Indonesia encounter poverty-related obstacles and constantly attempt to resolve them. The diversity of the poverty types that prevail in Indonesia indicates that people are incapable of recognizing the characteristics of each type and have difficulties extricating from the cycle of poverty. The community in Cianjur Regency, West Java, is a concrete example of the poverty cycle. The poverty line in Cianjur Regency, which is in the top five

of the poorest districts in West Java Province, is challenging to deal with. As the main subject in the poverty trap, women are vulnerable to family problems, starvation, health problems, inability to access education, limitations in employment opportunities, and many others. Family Life Education is proposed as an alternative to the poverty alleviation program. This program strengthens women as an essential part of the family to become independent individuals and leave the cycle of poverty.

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