



The Dynamics of Women's Roles in Timor-Leste's Traditional Communities Due to Urbanization

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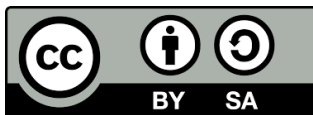
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Keywords:

Urbanization; Women; Gender Relations; Traditional Communities; Timor-Leste; Social Welfare

Abstract

Urbanization is a social phenomenon that brings significant changes to the structure of people's lives, including those of traditional communities in Timor-Leste. This process affects women's roles, gender relations, identity, and well-being. This study aimed to analyze changes in women's roles within traditional Timorese communities as a result of urbanization, particularly in the economic, social, cultural, and gender-relations dimensions. The study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach using in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Informants were selected purposively based on their social backgrounds, ages, and migration experiences. The data were analyzed thematically through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that urbanization encouraged a shift in women's roles from the domestic sphere to the public and economic spheres, increased their participation in family decision-making, and contributed to the development of more independent identities. However, women also faced various challenges, including double burdens, economic instability, cultural pressures, and limited social protection. Urbanization created opportunities for empowerment but also had the potential to intensify vulnerability when not supported by gender-responsive policies. The study concluded that the effects of urbanization on women were multidimensional and influenced by access to education, decent employment, social networks, and public policy support. Therefore, an inclusive and gender-sensitive development approach is needed to support the well-being of women in traditional communities in Timor-Leste.



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International Journal Labs

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization is a global phenomenon that continues to intensify alongside economic development, industrialization, and societal modernization. The United Nations notes that more than half of the world's population currently lives in urban areas, and this proportion is projected to continue increasing in the future. Urbanization not only affects economic structures and regional spatial planning but also produces complex social, cultural, and demographic consequences, including changes in gender relations and patterns of everyday life. In Southeast Asia, including Timor-Leste, urbanization has progressed rapidly in line with national development, the growth of economic centers, and increased population mobility from

rural to urban areas (Barbara et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2026; Hosgelen & Saikia, 2016; Hugo, 2019; Scambary & de Mesquita Lima, 2021).

As a relatively young country undergoing development consolidation, Timor-Leste faces various challenges in managing the effects of urbanization. The concentration of economic, educational, and public service activities in urban areas, particularly in Dili, has encouraged migration from rural communities. This population movement not only alters the demographic structure but also affects the continuity of traditional communities that have long formed the foundation of social life. In this context, urbanization has become an important driver of social transformation, including changes in the roles and social positions of women (Chant & McIlwaine, 2015; Cinar & Ugur-Cinar, 2018; Dhamija et al., 2025; Evans, 2018; Hammad, 2016).

Timorese society has strong sociocultural characteristics rooted in customary traditions, kinship systems, and local values. Social institutions such as *uma lulik*, clan relations, and various customary practices continue to play important roles in regulating social life, particularly in rural areas. Within these traditional structures, women generally play major roles in household management, maintaining family cohesion, and supporting customary activities and rituals. Women also contribute to subsistence economic activities such as agriculture, small-scale livestock farming, and traditional handicraft production. However, their participation in customary decision-making and community politics remains relatively limited because of persistent patriarchal norms (Abdulkadir & Abdulkadir, 2018; Abdullahi et al., 2024; Baynes et al., 2019; Dhesi, 2025; Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019).

Patriarchal norms in traditional societies often place women in subordinate positions relative to men. Women are frequently perceived as supporting male roles within both the family and the wider community. At the same time, local cultural values may also recognize women as symbols of honor, continuity of lineage, and guardians of family identity. This situation reflects a duality in the social construction of women's roles in Timor-Leste, which has become increasingly dynamic as communities encounter modernization and urbanization (Johnston, 2018; Myrntinen, 2024; S. Niner, 2016; S. L. Niner & Loney, 2020; O'Keeffe, 2017).

Urbanization has brought significant changes to traditional patterns of life. Population movement to urban areas not only changes places of residence but also influences ways of thinking, value systems, and patterns of social interaction. Urban environments expose communities to more heterogeneous, competitive, and market-oriented social systems. These conditions encourage shifts from collectivist values toward greater individualism and from subsistence-based economic systems toward wage- and service-based economies. Such changes also affect social relations within families and communities.

For women from traditional communities, urbanization has created new opportunities while also introducing various challenges. On the one hand, urban life provides broader access to education, information, employment, and public participation. Many women have become increasingly involved in trade, services, small-scale industries, and administrative work. This participation contributes to household income and strengthens women's economic position. In addition, greater access to education in urban areas has encouraged increased awareness among women of their social, economic, and political rights.

On the other hand, urbanization has also created multiple forms of vulnerability for women. Many women work in the informal sector without adequate legal protection, social

security, or decent wages. Their workload is often intensified because they continue to bear substantial domestic responsibilities while also facing economic demands outside the home. This double burden can adversely affect women's physical, psychological, and social well-being. In addition, women in urban areas may remain vulnerable to discrimination, labor exploitation, and various forms of gender-based violence.

Social transformation resulting from urbanization has also affected family structures and relationships. Extended-family arrangements that were previously dominant in traditional communities have gradually shifted toward nuclear-family structures. This change has influenced the distribution of roles and responsibilities among family members, including household decision-making and economic management. In many cases, women are expected to become more economically independent; however, this increased responsibility is not always accompanied by greater bargaining power within the family. This indicates that structural changes do not necessarily occur alongside corresponding changes in gender power relations.

Urbanization has also influenced the formation of women's identities and perspectives on life. Interaction with global culture, mass media, and information technology has introduced values associated with gender equality, independence, and freedom of expression. Exposure to these values has shaped women's perspectives on social roles, education, employment, and marriage. However, such identity changes may also generate intergenerational tensions, particularly regarding the interpretation of customary norms and traditions. These tensions may, in turn, affect social cohesion within traditional communities.

In addition to influencing identity, urbanization also affects the pattern of women's social relationships with their families and communities. Migration to urban areas reduces the intensity of interaction with extended families and traditional social networks. Social support previously obtained through customary communities may become increasingly limited, requiring women to establish new social networks in urban environments. In this context, various forms of solidarity among women have emerged through business groups, community organizations, and informal networks that function as social capital in addressing the challenges of urban life.

Although urbanization and gender have been widely studied globally, research specifically addressing the dynamics of women's roles in Timor-Leste's traditional communities remains relatively limited. Most studies emphasize economic development, post-conflict political stability, and the strengthening of state institutions, while women's social experiences in responding to structural change have received less attention. Limited empirical evidence concerning women's conditions and adaptation strategies may also contribute to public policies that are not fully responsive to the specific needs of women from traditional backgrounds.

These conditions indicate a gap between the social realities experienced by women and the development policies implemented. Housing, employment, education, and economic empowerment programs in urban areas have not fully incorporated gender perspectives or women's cultural backgrounds. As a result, some women continue to experience marginalization within the development process. Therefore, in-depth research is needed to examine women's experiences, adaptation strategies, and changing roles in response to urbanization.

The study of changes in women's roles within traditional communities as a consequence of urbanization is strategically relevant to social development in Timor-Leste. Women are important actors in family and community development; therefore, strengthening their capacities and well-being may directly contribute to improvements in human development. A comprehensive understanding of women's experiences during processes of social transformation can also provide a foundation for more inclusive, gender-equitable, and sustainable policymaking.

In addition, this research contributes to efforts to balance modernization with the preservation of local cultural values. By understanding the dynamics of social change, communities and governments can develop models of development that respect customary traditions while promoting gender equality. Through this perspective, urbanization should be understood not only as an economic and spatial process but also as a social transformation that must be managed humanely and equitably.

Based on this discussion, urbanization has brought complex changes to the lives of women in Timor-Leste's traditional communities, including changes in their economic, social, cultural, and identity-related experiences. On the one hand, urbanization creates opportunities for empowerment; on the other hand, it also introduces various forms of vulnerability. Women are therefore required to negotiate traditional and modern roles, often within unequal social and economic conditions.

For this reason, systematic and in-depth research on the dynamics of women's roles in Timor-Leste's traditional communities in the context of urbanization is important. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to gender studies and urban sociology and practically to the formulation of development policies that are more responsive to women's needs. Accordingly, this background emphasizes the urgency of examining women's social realities in the context of ongoing structural transformation.

Based on the discussion above, this study was guided by four main research questions: how urbanization has affected changes in women's roles within traditional communities in Timor-Leste; how gender relations within traditional families and communities have changed following women's experiences of urbanization; which factors facilitate or hinder women's adaptation to urban life; and to what extent urbanization affects women's identities, social positions, and well-being in traditional communities in Timor-Leste. In line with these research questions, this study aims to examine in depth the dynamics of changing women's roles in Timor-Leste's traditional communities as a result of urbanization, particularly changes in roles and gender relations, factors facilitating and constraining adaptation, and the effects of these changes on women's identities, social positions, and well-being. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of gender studies and urban sociology and practically to policymakers' efforts to formulate inclusive and gender-responsive development policies. The study may also serve as a reference for future research examining the dynamics of women's roles in traditional communities experiencing modernization and urbanization.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach to examine the dynamics of women's roles in Timor-Leste's traditional communities in response to urbanization. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and

document analysis involving women from traditional communities who had experienced urbanization, as well as indigenous leaders, family members, and other relevant stakeholders. Informants were selected through purposive sampling to represent diverse social backgrounds, age groups, and migration experiences. The data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, meanings, and changes in women's roles within the sociocultural and development context of Timor-Leste.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Urbanization on the Changing Role of Women in Traditional Communities in Timor-Leste

The urbanization process in Timor-Leste has brought significant changes to the social, economic, and cultural structure of society, especially for women from traditional communities. The move from rural to urban areas not only changes living spaces, but also shapes women's mindsets, life orientations, and social relationships. In this context, urbanization is a major factor that drives the transformation of women's roles from domestic and community-based roles to more diverse and public-space-oriented roles.

Based on interviews with female informants in the Dili, Baucau, and Liquiça regions, it is known that most of the respondents decided to migrate to the city for economic and educational reasons. One of the informants, Maria, 32, stated that she left her village in Ermera to find a job to help the family economy. She revealed, "In the village I only help my parents in the garden. In Dili I can sell vegetables at the market and earn my own money for my children's schooling." This statement shows that urbanization opens up space for women to play the role of the main breadwinner in the family.

The changing economic role of women is one of the most pronounced impacts of urbanization. In traditional communities, women are generally involved in subsistence economic activities whose outcomes are not always financially valued. However, in urban areas, women begin to engage in market-based economic activities, such as trading, working in the service sector, becoming domestic workers, or working in private offices. Interview results show that about 70% of the female informants interviewed work in the informal sector, while the rest work in the formal and semi-formal sectors.

Another informant, Ana, 27, who works as a shop clerk in Dili, said that the income she earns gives her a sense of confidence and independence. She says: "Now I don't always ask my husband for money. I can also help pay the rent and the children's schooling." This suggests that urbanization is driving a shift in economic relations in the family, where women are no longer entirely dependent on men.

In addition to changes in economic roles, urbanization also affects women's social roles in families and communities. In villages, women tend to be tied to customary social structures that strictly regulate their roles and behaviors. Women's participation in indigenous decision-making is still limited and is more represented by men. However, in urban environments, social structures have become more flexible and open. Women have wider opportunities to express their opinions, participate in community activities, and be involved in social organizations.

Field observations show that many migrant women are involved in social groups, small business groups, and religious organizations. This involvement expands their social networks and strengthens their social position in the new neighborhood. Teresa (40), a chairwoman of a

small business group in Comoro, revealed that through these groups, women can share experiences and support each other. She states: "If there are work or family problems, we talk together. In the villages, women rarely spoke in public."

Urbanization has also brought changes in the role of women in education and self-development. Access to schools, skills courses, and job training in cities provides opportunities for women to increase their capacity. Based on interview data, about 60% of the informants continued their education or participated in training after moving to the city. This has an impact on increasing awareness of the importance of education for themselves and their children.

Rosa, 24, a student from Manatuto, said that living in Dili opened her eyes on the importance of education for women. She says, "In the village, many women marry young. After I see it in the city, I want to finish college before I get married." This statement shows that urbanization has also changed the orientation of women's lives, especially related to planning for the future.

However, the change in women's roles due to urbanization has not always taken place positively and without obstacles. Many women face social pressure from their families and communities of origin who still hold to traditional values. Some informants admitted that they received criticism for being considered too independent or not complying with customary norms. Lucia, 35 years old, stated, "When I returned home, my family said I had changed, too free like a city person." This shows the tension between traditional values and modern values experienced by migrant women.

In addition to cultural pressures, women also face various forms of vulnerability in urban areas. Employment in the informal sector often does not provide a guarantee of a fixed income and social protection. About 55% of the informants stated that they have experienced income uncertainty or sudden job loss. This has an impact on family economic stability and women's welfare.

Double burden is also a major problem experienced by urban women. Despite being involved in economic activities, women still bear the main responsibilities in domestic work, such as taking care of children, cooking, and cleaning the house. The results of the interviews showed that most of the informants worked an average of 8–10 hours per day, but still had to complete household chores at night. This condition has the potential to cause physical fatigue and psychological stress.

Changes in women's roles also affect power relations in the family. In some cases, increasing women's economic contribution strengthens their bargaining position in household decision-making. However, in other cases, it triggers conflicts with couples who feel they have lost traditional authority. Some informants admitted that they had experienced domestic quarrels related to role sharing and financial management.

On the other hand, urbanization has helped shape women's new identities as more independent and personal achievement-oriented individuals. Exposure to global media, technology, and culture is shaping a new perspective on gender roles, lifestyles, and social relationships. Women are beginning to see themselves not only as wives or mothers, but also as active workers, students, and members of society.

The results of the study show that this change in identity strengthens women's confidence and aspirations. However, these changes also require high adaptability in the face

of various social and economic pressures. Women must continue to negotiate between traditional and modern roles in daily life.

Overall, the process of urbanization has affected the changing role of women in traditional communities in Timor-Leste in a multidimensional way. Women have shifted their roles from the domestic sphere to the public sphere, from subsistence economies to market economies, and from subordinate positions to more participatory positions. While urbanization opens up opportunities for empowerment, it also presents challenges in the form of economic vulnerability, double burdens, cultural pressures, and gender conflicts.

These findings show that changes in women's roles due to urbanization are not linear and uniform, but are influenced by social background, education level, family support, and access to resources. Therefore, a gender-sensitive urban development policy based on the local cultural context is needed to ensure that the urbanization process truly contributes to improving the well-being and social justice of women in Timor-Leste.

Dynamics of Gender Relations in Traditional Families and Communities After the Urbanization Process

The results of observations show that migrant women who return to the village or maintain relationships with their communities of origin tend to bring new and more egalitarian values. Some informants admitted that they began to engage in extended family discussions related to children's education, land management, and traditional activities. Marta (38 years old) stated, "Now I dare to talk about family meetings, because I also help the family economy." This shows that economic contribution is one of the important factors in improving women's social position in the community.

Urbanization also affects communication patterns in the family. Interactions between husbands, wives, and children have become more open as exposure to the media and education increase. Many families have begun to adopt a more dialogical communication pattern than the authoritarian pattern that was previously dominant. About 65% of informants stated that they now discuss more often with their spouse in making decisions related to children's education, finances, and housing.

However, not all communities can openly accept these changes. Some women claim to still face social stigma when they are perceived as beyond the boundaries of traditional roles. They are often labeled as "urban women" who lack respect for customs. This stigma can limit women's participation in indigenous activities and weaken their social position in the community of origin.

In addition, changes in gender relations are also influenced by generational factors. Young women tend to be more adaptive to gender equality values than older generations. This difference in views sometimes triggers internal conflicts in the family, especially related to education, marriage, and career choices. However, in the long run, this process has the potential to encourage a gradual transformation of values in society.

Urbanization also encourages the formation of new social networks that affect gender relations. Through business groups, religious organizations, and women's communities, women gain space to share experiences and strengthen solidarity. These networks serve as a source of emotional and social support in dealing with domestic and community pressures.

The results of the study show that women who are active in social networks tend to have higher confidence and better negotiation skills in the family. They are better able to

convey their aspirations, negotiate the division of roles, and defend their rights. Thus, social networks are an important factor in strengthening women's position in gender relations.

Overall, the dynamics of gender relations in traditional families and communities after urbanization show a shift from hierarchical patterns of relationships to more flexible and negotiable ones. While these changes open up opportunities for greater equality, the process still faces a variety of structural and cultural barriers. Patriarchal values, social stigma, and limited access to resources remain major challenges.

These findings confirm that the transformation of gender relations due to urbanization is a complex and sustainable process. Therefore, systematic efforts through education, economic empowerment, and strengthening of community institutions are needed to support the creation of more equitable and inclusive gender relations in Timor-Leste's families and society.

Factors That Encourage and Hinder Women in Adjusting to Urban Life

The adaptation process of women from traditional communities to urban life in Timor-Leste is influenced by a variety of structural, social, economic, and cultural factors. Urbanization does not automatically guarantee women's success in adapting, but rather requires high adaptability in the face of a more complex, competitive, and dynamic environment. The results show that there are a number of factors that encourage and hinder women in the process of self-adjustment in urban areas.

One of the main driving factors is economic motivation. Most of the informants stated that the need to increase family income was the main reason they stayed in the city. The opportunity to get a job, both in the informal and formal sectors, gave hope for a better life. Elisabet (29 years old) stated: "Even though living in the city is difficult, I still survive because there are job opportunities here. In the village, it is difficult to get money." This statement shows that economic opportunities are the main attraction that encourages women to adapt to urban life.

In addition to economic factors, access to education and skills training is also an important driving factor. Urban environments provide a variety of formal and non-formal educational facilities that women can use to increase their capacity. Based on interview data, around 55% of informants took skills courses, job training, or continued education after migrating to the city. This strengthens confidence and opens up wider employment opportunities.

Family support and social networks also play a major role in women's successful adaptation. Women who receive support from their partners, nuclear families, or relatives tend to adjust more easily to city life. Social networks formed through business groups, religious organizations, and women's communities are also a source of information, help, and emotional support. Helena (36 years old) states, "If there were no friends and family here, I would probably have returned home." This shows the importance of social capital in the adaptation process.

Exposure to information and technology is also a driving factor in women's self-adjustment. Access to social media, the internet, and mobile phones helps women to obtain information about their employment opportunities, public services, and social rights. Communication technology also makes it easier for women to stay connected to their families in the village, thereby reducing the sense of isolation in urban environments.

On the other hand, there are various inhibiting factors that hinder women's adaptation process. Limited education and skills are one of the main obstacles. Women with low levels of education tend to be trapped in low-wage and unstable informal jobs. About 60% of informants stated that limited education limits their chances of obtaining more decent work.

Unstable economic conditions are also a significant inhibiting factor. The high cost of living in the city, such as rent, transportation, and basic necessities, is often not proportional to the income earned. Some informants admitted that they had to move from place to place or work more than one job to meet the needs of their families. Maria, 41, said: "Sometimes I run out of money just to pay rent and food, I can't save."

Cultural and psychological barriers also affect women's ability to adapt. The difference in values between village and urban life often creates emotional stress. Women have to adjust to a more individualistic lifestyle and lack of traditional community support. In addition, social stigma as "village women" or "immigrants" can weaken confidence and hinder social integration.

The dual burden between work and domestic responsibilities is another significant barrier. Despite working outside the home, women still bear the main responsibility for taking care of the household and children. This condition limits women's time and energy to develop themselves, attend training, or build a wider social network.

Limited access to public services is also a factor that hinders adaptation. Some informants complained about the difficulty of obtaining health services, children's education, and social assistance due to limited information or administrative constraints. This shows that the public service system is not fully responsive to the needs of migrant women.

In addition, vulnerability to labor exploitation and gender-based violence also hinders the process of self-adjustment. Some informants admitted to having experienced harassment, unfair treatment in the workplace, or delayed payment of wages. These experiences negatively impact women's psychological conditions and motivation to survive in the city.

The results show that women's adaptation success is greatly influenced by the interaction between driving and inhibiting factors. Women who have better education, strong social support, and access to information tend to be better able to overcome existing barriers. On the other hand, women who face limited resources and social pressure are at risk of marginalization in urban environments.

Overall, the factors that encourage and hinder women in adapting to urban life are multidimensional and interrelated. Therefore, women's empowerment efforts need to be carried out in an integrated manner through increasing access to education, skills training, strengthening social networks, workforce protection, and providing inclusive and gender-sensitive public services. With this approach, women from traditional communities can be more optimal in facing the challenges of urbanization and improving their quality of life in urban areas.

The Impact of Urbanization on Women's Identity, Social Position, and Well-Being in Traditional Communities in Timor-Leste

Urbanization not only affects economic aspects and gender relations, but also profoundly shapes women's identities, social positions, and levels of well-being in traditional communities in Timor-Leste. Migration to urban areas brings women together with new values, norms, and lifestyles that gradually shape their perceptions of themselves, social roles, and the

future. This process results in complex identity dynamics between traditional values and modernity.

The results of the interviews show that many women experience a change in the interpretation of their identity after living in the city. If previously women's identity was more associated with the role of wives, mothers, and clan members, then in urban environments they began to see themselves as independent individuals, workers, and subjects with personal aspirations. Emilia (26 years old) stated, "Now I feel that I am not only a wife, but also a worker with my own ideals." This statement shows a shift from a collective identity to a more individual and reflective identity.

Exposure to education, media, and information technology also strengthens the formation of women's new identities. Access to social media, news, and educational programs introduces discourses on gender equality, women's rights, and self-empowerment. Based on research data, around 65% of informants admitted that they better understand their rights and obligations as women after living in the city. This contributes to increasing critical awareness of their social position.

However, these changes in identity are not always positively received by the community of origin. Some women admit that they experience social pressure when returning to the village because they are considered to have "changed" and do not reflect traditional values. Catarina, 39, says, "When I go home, people say that I am like a city person, not the same as before." This reflects the tension between the new identity formed in the city and the social expectations of traditional communities.

In terms of social position, urbanization provides opportunities for women to increase their status and influence in the family and society. Economic contributions, higher levels of education, and organizational experience in cities are social capital that strengthens women's bargaining positions. Many informants stated that they are now more involved in family decision-making, including related to children's education, investment, and social activities.

Maria, 35, a small business manager in Dili, revealed that her success in managing the business has made her more respected by her extended family. She stated, "Now my family listens to me, because I also help the economy." This shows that economic independence plays an important role in improving women's social position.

However, the increase in social position does not occur evenly. Women with low education and unstable employment still tend to be in a weak social position. They are often less involved in decision-making and are still seen as dependents. This suggests that urbanization can widen the social gap between women based on socioeconomic background.

From the welfare aspect, urbanization has an ambivalent impact. On the one hand, access to jobs, health services, education, and urban infrastructure has the potential to improve women's quality of life. Some informants admitted that they were able to meet the basic needs of their families better after living in the city. Around 58% of the informants stated that their economic conditions were relatively better than when they were still living in the village.

On the other hand, the high cost of living, job uncertainty, and lack of social security are serious challenges to women's welfare. Many women have to work for long periods of time with incomes that are not proportional to the necessities of life. This condition has an impact on physical and mental health. Some informants admitted that they often experience fatigue, stress, and anxiety related to family economic conditions.

Urbanization also affects women's social and emotional well-being. Geographical distance from extended families and communities of origin leads to a reduction in traditional social support. Women have to build new support systems in urban environments, which is not always easy. For some women, social isolation and homesickness are psychological burdens in themselves.

However, for women who manage to build a strong social network, city life becomes a space for self-actualization. Involvement in community organizations, business groups, and religious communities provides a sense of belonging and increases subjective well-being. This network also serves as an informal social protection mechanism in the face of life's difficulties.

Overall, urbanization affects women's identities, social positions, and well-being in traditional communities in a multidimensional and non-uniform manner. Urbanization opens up opportunities for the formation of more independent identities, improved social positions, and improved well-being. However, this process also presents the risk of marginalization, cultural pressure, and economic vulnerability for some women.

These findings show that the impact of urbanization on women is highly dependent on access to education, decent work, social networks, as well as family support and public policies. Therefore, a holistic and gender-sensitive approach to development is needed to ensure that urbanization truly becomes a means of women's empowerment, not a new source of inequality. With this approach, women from traditional communities in Timor-Leste can benefit optimally from the ongoing process of social change.

CONCLUSION

Urbanization significantly shifted women's roles from the domestic sphere to the public and economic spheres. Women were no longer confined to subsistence activities but increasingly participated in market-based economic activities. This transition strengthened women's independence and bargaining power within families and communities. However, urbanization also created challenges, including economic vulnerability, the double burden of productive and domestic responsibilities, and cultural pressures. Consequently, these changes in women's roles occurred dynamically and did not always progress in a linear manner. Urbanization also transformed gender relations within traditional families and communities from hierarchical patterns toward more flexible and negotiable arrangements. Increased economic contributions and greater access to information strengthened women's participation in decision-making. Nevertheless, patriarchal values and social stigma remained significant barriers to achieving more equitable gender relations. Thus, the transformation of gender relations occurred gradually and was shaped by social, cultural, and generational factors.

Women's ability to adapt to urban life was influenced by the interaction between enabling and constraining factors. Key enabling factors included economic motivation, access to education, social support, and the use of information technology. In contrast, major constraints included limited educational opportunities, economic instability, the double burden of paid and domestic work, cultural barriers, and inadequate public services. Successful adaptation therefore depended substantially on access to resources and supportive social environments. Urbanization had multidimensional effects on women's identities, social positions, and well-being. It encouraged the development of greater personal independence, improved women's social standing through economic and educational participation, and

created opportunities to enhance their welfare. At the same time, however, urbanization could widen social inequalities and increase vulnerability among women with limited resources. Its effects were therefore strongly influenced by access to education, decent employment, social networks, and supportive public policies.

Based on these findings, several recommendations were proposed. Governments and policymakers should develop gender-responsive urban policies that address the specific needs of migrant women from traditional communities, particularly in relation to education, decent employment, social protection, and inclusive public services. Women's economic empowerment programs should also be designed with sensitivity to local sociocultural contexts to minimize tensions with traditional values. Communities and traditional institutions should create more inclusive spaces for dialogue between younger and older generations regarding women's roles so that social changes associated with urbanization can be managed constructively and respectfully. Future research should compare the experiences of women who migrate to urban areas with those who remain in rural communities and employ longitudinal designs to examine changes in women's roles over time. This study was limited by its focus on women who had migrated to urban areas without a comparison group of women who remained in rural communities; therefore, the findings were not intended to be statistically generalized. The study also relied on participants' retrospective accounts, which may have been affected by recall bias.

FUNDING

This study did not receive any specific funding from governmental institutions, private organizations, or other funding agencies.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conduct of the research, preparation, or publication of this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the preparation of this article. Carolina da Cruz, was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, data collection and analysis, interpretation of the results, and manuscript preparation. The other authors contributed to the review, editing, and final approval of the manuscript.

GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence was used in the preparation of this article.

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