

## Femicide as an extreme form of gender-based violence: Criminal profiling and prevention efforts in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Femicide is the most extreme form of gender-based violence, rooted in unequal power relations, sexism, and patriarchal culture. This study examines how Indonesian cultural contexts may contribute to femicide and identifies patterns of motives, risk factors, and perpetrator characteristics through a criminal profiling perspective. This research employed a descriptive qualitative design based on a literature review. A nomothetic approach was used to identify general patterns among femicide perpetrators. The findings show that femicide in Indonesia is largely associated with intimate partner violence, with common motives including jealousy, possessiveness, and a desire for control. The identified risk factors include perpetrator characteristics such as age, employment status, and prior history of violence; victim vulnerabilities such as age and economic dependence; and abusive relationship dynamics. Patriarchal values and certain social norms may also reinforce the justification of extreme violence, including honour killings. The study highlights the importance of integrating criminal profiling into femicide prevention strategies through early intervention, stronger law enforcement, and gender-responsive policies aimed at protecting women.

**Keywords:** *nomothetic, gender discrimination, patriarchy, risk factors, criminal profiling*

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**How to cite (APA 7<sup>th</sup>):** Pramita, A., Nurdibyanandaru, D., Herdiana, I., Kurniawan, A., & Putra, R. H. (2026). Femicide as an extreme form of gender-based violence: Criminal profiling and prevention efforts in Indonesia. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, 31(1), 27-34. <https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v31i1.95839>

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### INTRODUCTION

Criminal Profiling (CP) is a form of behavioral analysis technique used by investigators to help identify the characteristics of certain criminal behavior through analysis of crime scenes, modus operandi, and victimology (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2021).

A criminal profiler must understand how to construct valid inferences. This requires the application of scientific methods, mastery of applied scientific reasoning, and epistemic awareness to recognize errors in judgment. In addition, awareness of various forms of bias is an essential prerequisite (Turvey, 2023). To characterize an unknown offender, investigators must extrapolate likely characteristics from criminal behavior and information obtained from the crime scene. By comparing these characteristics with those of known offenders, a criminal profile can be developed. This forensic technique helps identify probable behavioral traits of offenders as well as their motivations for committing crimes (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2021).

There are two main approaches to criminal profiling: idiographic and nomothetic. The idiographic approach considers the specific traits of an offender to identify distinctive characteristics. It focuses on factual case information. The primary aim of the idiographic approach is to study and determine the unique characteristics of the offender responsible for a specific criminal act involving a particular victim (Turvey, 2023). Using this approach, CP is developed through the analysis of a single case (or several related cases) committed by one offender, as in Behavioral Evidence Analysis. This deductive approach is based on conclusions drawn from case data. Such analysis includes a comprehensive examination of

the crime scene, physical and psychological evidence, with particular attention to victimology (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2021).

In contrast, the nomothetic approach examines characteristics that can be generally inferred from groups of offenders. Its purpose is to identify common traits among individuals who commit similar crimes. This approach is abstract in nature and relies on inductive reasoning, as well as statistical, comparative, and correlational methods. It is grounded in scientific psychology and based on one key principle: if certain crimes share similar features but are committed by different offenders, then those offenders may possess similar personality traits. Thus, this approach identifies theoretically probable offender characteristics (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2021; Turvey, 2023).

Within this framework, CP employs two principal methods: clinical and statistical. Clinical methods rely on professional experience, knowledge, intuition, and training to predict offender characteristics. Early studies in CP were largely clinical in nature. In contrast, statistical methods are based on analyses of multiple offenders who committed similar crimes, with the aim of predicting behavioral patterns that may emerge in future cases (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2021).

According to the United Nations Declaration (1993), violence against women is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Stassi et al., 2024).

Violence is intentional behavior rather than the result of a loss of control. It often reflects unequal power and control within relationships, where coercion is used to resolve conflict through domination (Caroppo et al., 2024).

Gender-based violence may be understood as an “act of war” directed against a defeated enemy. It reflects escalating tension and aggression that may lead to lethal outcomes, depriving women of autonomy over their own lives. In such situations, women are reduced to victims without identity or agency. The combined effects of physical and psychological trauma may also contribute to the intergenerational transmission of trauma and violence within cultures (Caroppo et al., 2024).

Indonesia is the world’s largest archipelagic nation and is home to diverse customs, cultures, ethnic groups, races, and religions. Such diversity inevitably creates social complexity. Friction among groups remains a common issue. As a country strongly influenced by patriarchal traditions and male-dominated power structures, Indonesia cannot be separated from discussions concerning the position of women (Sabrina, 2024).

Linguistically, patriarchy derives from *patri-arkat*, referring to a structure that places men as the sole and central ruling group. Patriarchal culture positions men as socially dominant over women (Sabrina, 2024).

The patriarchal social system places women in subordinate and secondary positions within community structures. This system disadvantages women. Sexual harassment and violence are often normalized, with women treated as objects of male desire. Such pressures deeply affect women’s lives and dignity. One form of violence closely linked to patriarchy is femicide (Refikal et al., 2024).

Femicide is defined as the killing of women simply because they are women (Caroppo et al., 2024). CEGS (2020) defines femicide as gender-based violence rooted in sex discrimination, sexism, misogyny, and exploitation within relationships based on trust, kinship, authority, or other unequal power relations (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Sexism refers to beliefs or attitudes that position one gender as superior to another, reflected across many aspects of social life (Kun, 2022). Misogyny, on the other hand, refers to hatred toward women and may manifest in forms such as male supremacy, patriarchy, gender discrimination, sexual violence, belittlement of women, abuse, and sexual objectification (Srivastava et al., 2017). Femicide is influenced by motives, social conditions, women’s identities, and economic, social, and cultural backgrounds. It is also shaped by the relationship between offender and victim, particularly unequal power relations that render the victim more vulnerable than the perpetrator (Salamor et al., 2024).

In 2023, approximately 51,100 women were killed worldwide. Intimate partner femicide remains one of the most common forms, with around 30% of cases committed by current or former partners

(Stassi et al., 2024). In 2023, the highest number of victims killed by intimate partners or family members was recorded in Africa (21,700), followed by Asia (18,500) (United Nations, 2023). These figures demonstrate the severity of violence against women. The high prevalence of femicide reflects the complexity of cultural, social, economic, and legal factors. In many Asian countries, women continue to experience various forms of discrimination and violence in both domestic and public spheres (Adyan & Anditya, 2025). Particularly in low- and middle-income countries, femicide remains a public health and human rights issue that is underreported, under researched, and poorly understood (Reis & Meyer, 2024).

In Indonesia, reported cases of violence against women reached 445,502, representing an increase of 43,527 cases (10.83%) compared with 2023 (401,975). By type, the most common forms were sexual violence (36.43%), psychological violence (26.94%), physical violence (26.78%), and economic violence (9.84%) (Komnas Perempuan, 2025). One case of gender-based violence against women in Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra, caused widespread public concern. The crime involved not only murder but also mutilation of the victim's body, indicating an extraordinary level of brutality. The incident disturbed the local community and generated fear throughout West Sumatra (Widhana et al., 2025).

Gender-based violence has been identified as a public health and social problem, requiring analysis of its complexity and typologies such as physical, sexual, and economic violence, all of which harm victims' health comprehensively. Women who experience sexual violence often suffer changes in physical appearance due to injuries, mental health disturbances caused by trauma, and increased social withdrawal. Women with histories of victimization have been identified as often experiencing post-traumatic stress, behavioral disorders, anxiety, depression, substance addiction, and in some cases psychotic episodes and suicidal ideation. Prolonged suffering may lead to depersonalization, helplessness, and self-devaluation, thereby affecting human dignity (Hernández-Flórez et al., 2024; Refikal et al., 2024).

Given the severity of femicide globally and its serious impact in Indonesia, it is important to understand how Indonesian culture may shape femicide patterns so that criminal profiling of perpetrators can be developed. Greater sensitivity to violence against women in both domestic and public settings is expected to help Indonesia become a safer country for women and reduce femicide across families, communities, educational institutions, and government agencies (Adyan & Anditya, 2025).

This study aims to examine the role of Indonesian culture in shaping femicide by exploring patterns of motives, risk factors, and the dynamics of gender-based violence underlying these crimes, while also identifying the psychological, social, and behavioral characteristics of perpetrators. Specifically, the study addresses the role of Indonesian culture in shaping femicide, the classification of femicide, and the characteristics and risk factors of both perpetrators and victims. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of criminal profiles of femicide offenders in Indonesia, while also serving as a basis for prevention efforts, early intervention, and the formulation of more effective gender-responsive policies for the protection of women.

## METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a literature review method to explore the characteristics of femicide perpetrators as a group. The study aimed to identify common characteristics of femicide offenders through a nomothetic approach, with the broader goal of contributing to efforts to reduce or prevent femicide in Indonesia. A literature review was selected because it enables researchers to collect, examine, and synthesize various sources of information relevant to the research topic (Maisarah et al., 2022).

The data sources consisted of published documents, including books, journal articles, and online materials related to the criminal profiling of femicide perpetrators. Data were collected through literature review procedures, which involved selecting sources published within a specified period. The search was conducted through Google Scholar using the keywords *Indonesian patriarchy*, *femicide*, and *criminal profiling*. The inclusion criteria for the selected literature were as follows: (1) national and

international publications; (2) published within the last ten years; and (3) available in full-text format. Based on these criteria, a total of 20 research articles were included in the review. The data were analyzed descriptively, with the researcher providing a comprehensive account of the role of Indonesian culture in shaping femicide and its implications for CP. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the analysis involved competent subject-matter experts and media experts who reviewed and validated the collected data (Maisarah et al., 2022).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Patriarchal culture has long been embedded in social values and community life in Indonesia. This has weakened the social position of women while reinforcing the dominance of men (Refikal et al., 2024). Although Indonesian law upholds the principle of equality before the law, meaning that all individuals are formally equal in the eyes of the law, social and structural inequalities continue to persist in practice. For centuries, women have often been viewed as inferior to men. This has contributed to discrimination and violence that are reproduced, normalized, and transmitted across generations, eventually being perceived as ordinary or acceptable (Sabrina, 2024). Much of this violence is discriminatory in nature and rooted in gender inequality. Gender itself is understood as a socially constructed concept that differentiates men and women through assigned roles, behaviors, mentalities, and emotional characteristics (Refikal et al., 2024).

According to Miranda and Rumilah (2024), knowledge about women, including perceptions of female sexuality, is often shaped from a male-centered perspective. In other words, many dominant representations of women merely reflect masculinity. Male sexuality and desire, especially those linked to bodily power and control, function as organizing principles within symbolic systems that dominate social power. As a result, women remain socially marginalized and are frequently perceived as objects rather than autonomous subjects.

The stereotypical distinctions between masculinity and femininity reflect deep inequalities in the social order. Qualities that society values as strong, rational, and superior are commonly associated with masculinity, whereas qualities perceived as weak are attached to femininity. Patriarchal systems therefore sustain male power, where men are assumed to have the right to regulate and define the boundaries of women's behavior (Miranda & Rumilah, 2024). This can be seen in restrictions on women's rights, access, participation, and control, as well as expectations regarding women's roles, duties, and obligations (Apriliandra & Krisnani, n.d.).

Based on the National Commission on Violence Against Women, several forms of femicide have occurred in Indonesia, including sexual violence followed by murder, jealousy-related killings, murders linked to unregistered marriages that perpetrators wish to conceal, hidden prostitution, and violence in dating or domestic relationships (Salamor et al., 2024). Moreover, based on the European Institute for Gender Equality, femicide can be divided into five categories: intimate partner femicide, sexual femicide, femicide against women over 65 years old, femicide-suicide, and other forms of femicide (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Intimate partner femicide includes killings committed by current or former partners, as well as certain family members (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women in 2023 show that intimate femicide, namely the killing of women and girls by current or former partners, was the most common category, with 109 cases or 67% of all reported femicide cases (Salamor et al., 2024). In the typology of intimate homicides, perpetrators are commonly grouped into three profiles based on motives and risk factors: the "betrayed husband" (jealousy), the "abandoned obsessive lover" (separation), and the "tyrant" (control) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

In Indonesia, one case of intimate partner femicide occurred in Mojokerto in 2025. A man named Alvi Maulana (24) killed his girlfriend, TAS (25), and mutilated the victim's body into hundreds of pieces. Some body parts were discarded in Mojokerto, while others were kept in the victim's boarding house in Surabaya. The killing was reportedly triggered by an argument after the victim locked the house when the perpetrator returned home, which ended with the victim being stabbed in the neck using a

kitchen knife. This case reflects the characteristics of “the tyrant,” where the perpetrator sought to dominate and control the victim.

Sexual femicide has been defined in different ways, ranging from murder involving rape to broader definitions of homicide that contain a sexual element. In sexual femicide, the woman’s death involves two central components: the killing itself and the perpetrator’s sexual behavior during and after the murder (Caroppo et al., 2024). Such acts may include removing clothing, repositioning clothing, staging the body in sexualized poses, or engaging in substitute sexual acts such as masturbation on or near the victim’s body (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). This reflects an extreme form of domination in which sexuality is used to degrade the victim even in death (Caroppo et al., 2024).

This sexual femicide case also occurred in Cikarang in 2024. The suspect allegedly had sexual intercourse with the victim before murdering her. After the killing, the suspect purchased a suitcase to store the victim’s body. This case aligns with the concept of sexual femicide because it combines lethal violence with sexual conduct.

Femicide against women over the age of 65 has a relatively high prevalence due to the vulnerability often associated with older age. Women in this group may become victims not only of intimate partners but also of men outside intimate relationships. Dobash and Dobash (2015) found that offenders outside intimate contexts often target victims because of their vulnerability and because they are women. Many such murders are committed by men living in the same neighborhood, who are often unemployed and chronic substance abusers (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). In Indonesia, one such case involved a 78-year-old woman who was killed by her biological son, who was unemployed and lived with the victim.

Femicide-suicide refers to cases in which a male perpetrator kills a woman and then commits or attempts suicide. This pattern is relatively common, occurring in approximately 5% to 50% of intimate partner femicide cases depending on the context studied (Koureta et al., 2025). It is often associated with jealousy, possessiveness, and a prior history of violence (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Such a case occurred in Denpasar in 2023. A man with the initials IWAY (39) was found hanging behind his house after killing his wife with an air rifle. The incident was reportedly linked to financial and family problems that led to conflict between the couple.

In studies of adolescent femicide in Romania, jealousy arising from suspicions of infidelity was identified as a major motive. Other studies found that adolescent femicide often develops from violent relationship patterns formed during youth, compounded by inadequate education and the absence of strong support systems that prevent victims from seeking help. This category also includes honor killings, which are often carried out by family members to preserve family reputation (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

An honor killing case occurred in Bantaeng Regency, South Sulawesi, in 2020. The murder was carried out by two older siblings in front of the father, mother, and several other family members, including one person being held by the family. The act was linked to a local tradition known as siri’, which relates to preserving family dignity.

Other forms of femicide include killings committed outside family settings, such as murders of female co-workers or killings targeting women and girls in conflict situations (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Another case occurred in East Halmahera in 2025. A female co-worker was murdered after allegedly refusing to lend the suspect 30 million rupiah for wedding expenses. The suspect was reportedly in debt after spending a bank loan on online gambling.

The main risk factors in femicide cases are generally related to perpetrator characteristics, relationship type, and motive. Perpetrators are often known to the victim, either family members (55%), current partners (45%), or former partners, especially in relationships marked by physical abuse, psychological violence, and death threats (Stassi et al., 2024; United Nations, 2013). In sexual femicide cases, Dobash and Dobash (2015) identified common offender characteristics such as being younger than the victim, unemployed, single or separated/divorced, living alone, and having histories of sexual

or physical violence against women. These perpetrators often blame the victim and claim they were punishing her resistance.

Although many studies suggest that victims under the influence of drugs have a higher risk of being killed, this pattern was not found in homicide cases in France, where only 3% of victims and 5% of perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol. By comparison, in male homicide cases, the percentages were higher, with 25% of victims and 30% of perpetrators under the influence of alcohol. These figures were also higher than those reported in femicide cases, where 11% of victims and 20% of perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol (United Nations, 2013). Meanwhile, in femicide cases involving women over the age of 65, perpetrators are commonly reported to be chronic substance abusers (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

In femicide-suicide cases, additional risk factors include social isolation and firearm ownership (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). In Italy, sharp-force injuries and gunshot wounds were identified as the leading causes of death in femicide cases, followed by strangulation and blunt-force trauma (Stassi et al., 2024).

Victim vulnerability also plays a significant role and often influences the killing's modus operandi. Victims under 50 years old are more likely to die from sharp-force injuries or asphyxia, while those aged 50 and above more often die from blunt-force trauma. This may reflect the greater physical ability of younger women to resist, leading perpetrators to use more aggressive weapons or methods (Stassi et al., 2024).

The age profile of intimate partner femicide victims shows the highest risk among women aged 26–35, while perpetrators are commonly aged 36–45 (United Nations, 2013). Koureta et al. (2025) found a broader perpetrator age range of 34–52, with the most common ages between 40 and 50 and a maximum reported age of 97. Risk also increases when there is a large age gap between partners, particularly when the man is 16 years older than the woman or when the woman is 10 years older than the man. In Indonesia, however, the highest proportion of female victims of violence was recorded in the 18–24 age group (25%), while perpetrators were most aged 25–40 (31%) (National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2025).

Employment status also appears relevant. Perpetrators of intimate partner femicide are more likely to be employed than perpetrators in some other homicide categories. However, unemployment remains a significant risk factor. Elevated risk has also been found among perpetrators working in occupations linked to legal authority (9.7% of offenders) (Koureta et al., 2025). This is consistent with findings that femicide against women over 65 is often committed by unemployed men (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

In Indonesia, on the other hand, the most common occupation among reported perpetrators was private-sector employee (16%), while many victims were students (40%). The educational attainment among femicide perpetrators is generally lower than that of the wider population. The perpetrators of intimate partner femicide often have higher educational levels than male perpetrators in other homicide categories. They also tend to have below-average socioeconomic status, although higher than overall female perpetrators in homicide cases (Koureta et al., 2025). The most common educational level for both victims and perpetrators in Indonesia was senior high school or equivalent (30%) (National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2025).

Historically, most femicide or attempted femicide cases occur in the victim's home (Cantor et al., 2022). Around 11% occur on streets or in public places. In public killings, the victim usually knew the perpetrator (84%) (United Nations, 2013). For femicide cases involving women over 65, many offenders come from the same neighborhood as the victim (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

Common motives include extreme jealousy, suspicions that the victim was involved with another man, possessiveness, and refusal to accept separation. In such cases, the killing is often justified by the perpetrator through distorted beliefs about authority, ownership, and women's subordinate status, leading to a perceived loss of control over the partner after separation or divorce (Stassi et al., 2024; United Nations, 2013).

By examining the role of patriarchal culture in Indonesia, patterns of motives, risk factors, and gender-based violence dynamics underlying femicide can be better understood. This also enables the identification of psychological, social, and behavioral characteristics of perpetrators.

The findings of this literature review confirm that femicide is not an isolated criminal act, but an extreme manifestation of gender-based violence deeply rooted in social structures, cultural norms, and unequal power relations. In the Indonesian context, patriarchal culture plays a significant role in increasing women's vulnerability while normalizing male control, domination, and violence.

Within Indonesian cultural contexts, phenomena such as honor killings demonstrate how local norms can legitimize extreme violence. Traditions and values that position women as symbols of family honor contribute to women's objectification, so that perceived violations of norms are seen as threats that must be resolved through violence. This situation develops through social pressure and layered expectations: individuals who do not punish the original offender may themselves be sanctioned by others, while those who fail to punish that person may also face punishment, creating an endless cycle. These interconnected expectations and pressures help preserve harmful norms, even when those norms lead to extreme violence (Aksoy & Szekely, 2025).

Aksoy and Szekely (2025) further stated that honor killings are most likely to occur in environments where honor norms are influential but not absolute. When such norms are weak, killings are less likely. Where norms are overwhelmingly strict and universally observed, violations become less common. The greatest risk emerges in the middle zone, where norms are strong enough to create pressure but not strong enough to prevent conflict. Therefore, examining community norms can help identify environmental risk factors for femicide and support preventive action.

An important implication of these findings is the need to integrate criminal profiling into femicide prevention strategies in Indonesia. Criminal profiles developed through a nomothetic approach may help identify high-risk individuals, dangerous relationship patterns, or vulnerable contexts. In addition, understanding perpetrators' motives and psychological dynamics can assist law enforcement officers and related professionals in conducting early intervention, risk assessment, and more informed decision-making in handling gender-based violence cases.

## CONCLUSION

Femicide is an extreme manifestation of gender-based violence that cannot be understood merely as an individual crime, but rather as the result of a complex interaction between psychological factors, interpersonal relationships, and broader socio-cultural structures. In the Indonesian context, patriarchal culture plays a significant role in shaping unequal power relations that increase women's vulnerability to violence, including murder. A nomothetic approach in criminal profiling makes it possible to identify common patterns in offender characteristics and violence dynamics, which can be used as a basis for prevention through the identification of high-risk relationships and early intervention. Therefore, efforts to prevent femicide in Indonesia require a multidisciplinary approach that integrates law enforcement, gender equality education, changes in social norms, and stronger policies for the protection of women. These findings are expected to contribute to the development of criminal profiles of femicide perpetrators and to the formulation of more effective and sustainable prevention strategies.

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