

Research Article**Women's Economic Contribution to Household Welfare: A Case Study of Vegetable Vendors in Katangka, Gowa Regency, Indonesia**Indar Nurul Iksa^{1*}, Syarifah Balkis¹, Rusdi¹¹Department of Social Sciences Education, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, 90221, Indonesia**ARTICLE INFO****Article History:**

Received: 2025-12-02

Accepted: 2025-12-14

Published: 2025-12-17

Keywords:

Adaptation Strategies; Economic Empowerment; Gender Roles; Household Resilience; Informal Trade

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ISSN xxxx

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ABSTRACT

Although many still regard women's economic contributions as merely supplementary, field observations show that female vegetable vendors play a central role in sustaining household economic stability. This study examines their contribution to household income, the strategies they apply in managing their businesses, and the challenges they encounter in daily economic activities. I employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. I collected data through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed them through stages of data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that female vegetable vendors significantly strengthen household economies by generating income and managing financial resources. They make key decisions regarding capital allocation, stock management, and profit utilization. They also apply adaptive business strategies, including choosing effective selling locations, adjusting prices to market conditions, and introducing product and service innovations to attract customers. Despite these efforts, they face persistent obstacles such as limited capital, unstable commodity prices, and the dual burden of domestic and economic responsibilities. These challenges constrain their business growth and increase their vulnerability to market fluctuations. The study proposes several solutions to support their economic roles, including expanding access to microfinance, providing business management training, and strengthening institutional support systems. Such interventions can enhance the economic capabilities of female vendors and promote greater financial stability within their households. Ultimately, this research highlights the need to recognize and reinforce the strategic economic roles that women play in informal market sectors, particularly in communities like Katangka.

How to cite: Iksa, I. N., Balkis, S., & Rusdi. (2025). Women's Economic Contribution to Household Welfare: A Case Study of Vegetable Vendors in Katangka, Gowa Regency, Indonesia. *Junggea Journal Social Science Review*, 1(1), 05–09.

1. Introduction

Women play a critical role in strengthening household economies and advancing national development, including within the Indonesian context. Numerous studies demonstrate that women's empowerment and gender equality contribute significantly to sustainable and inclusive economic growth (UNDP, 2023). In Indonesia, women's involvement in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector is substantial; as of December 2019, approximately 4.4 million small and medium enterprises were operating nationwide, with nearly 60% of businesses in the food and beverage sector managed by women (Hidayat & Alliyah, 2021). These figures illustrate the strategic position of women within informal economic activities that serve as the backbone of many household livelihoods.

At the local level, this contribution is evident among female vegetable vendors in Katangka, Gowa Regency. A field survey conducted on 7 August 2024 identified 42 women engaged in vegetable trading across traditional markets and informal selling points. This number indicates that vegetable trading remains a significant economic activity for local households. Despite their economic importance, these women face numerous structural barriers, including limited access to formal capital, insufficient government support (Juita et al., 2020), unstable commodity prices, and increasing competition within the market (Sari, 2021). They also bear a double burden as they balance domestic responsibilities with income-generating activities. Moreover, persistent gender

inequality in household and community decision-making often restricts their opportunities for broader empowerment.

These challenges highlight a gap between women's economic contributions and the constraints that hinder their potential. To address this gap, the present study seeks to answer three key research questions: (1) What roles do female vegetable vendors play in enhancing household economic conditions? (2) What strategies do they employ in managing their trading activities? and (3) What challenges do they encounter in their daily economic pursuits? By examining these questions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of women's economic roles in the informal sector and to inform gender-responsive empowerment initiatives.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was selected to enable an in-depth and contextual understanding of the roles of female vegetable vendors in Katangka, Gowa Regency, particularly in relation to their contributions to household economic improvement. This approach facilitated a nuanced exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies in managing their economic activities. The case study design was chosen because the research focuses on female vegetable vendors in Katangka as a single, bounded unit of analysis, allowing for a comprehensive and intensive examination of the dynamics shaping their economic roles.

The research participants consisted of female vegetable vendors, their spouses, and the village head of Katangka. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation to ensure a rich and triangulated understanding of the phenomenon. To enhance the credibility of the findings, data validity was established using source triangulation by comparing information obtained from multiple informants and data types.

Data analysis followed three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, relevant information was organized and categorized to identify emerging patterns. The data display stage involved presenting the organized data to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusion drawing was conducted to generate analytical insights and synthesize the findings in accordance with the research objectives.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Women's Roles in Strengthening Household Economy

3.1.1 Contribution to Household Income

The findings of this study indicate that female vegetable vendors in Katangka contribute significantly to their household income. Their earnings serve not merely as supplementary income but often as a primary financial source supporting essential needs such as children's education, daily consumption, and monthly household expenses. These women also demonstrate financial literacy by setting aside portions of their income as savings or emergency funds, reflecting long-term economic planning and sustainability. This aligns with the findings of The Income Contribution of Women Mobile Vegetable Traders... (2025), which report that women in micro-trading significantly enhance household resilience by stabilizing income through informal sector activities. Similarly, Ekaputri et al. (2025) highlight that women's economic participation and financial decision-making substantially strengthen household financial resilience within low-income communities.

3.1.2 Contribution to Household Financial Management

The study further reveals that many vegetable vendors employ simple but effective financial management practices, such as maintaining daily records of revenue and expenses and separating personal and business finances. This practice allows them to monitor cash flow, calculate profit and loss accurately, and make informed financial decisions. These findings are consistent with Hutaurok et al. (2024), who demonstrate that routine financial recording within micro-enterprises enhances business sustainability. The vendors also allocate funds strategically, prioritizing urgent household needs—such as children's education and daily necessities—while ensuring the availability of business capital. Hence, their role extends beyond income generation to include household financial stewardship, contributing substantially to household economic stability (Jumiyanti, Ashar, & Badriyah, 2024).

3.2 Business Strategies Used by Vegetable Vendors

3.2.1 Location and Timing Strategies

Female vegetable vendors in Katangka adopt strategic location-selection practices, choosing to sell near residential areas, traditional markets, and high-traffic zones to attract customers and maximize sales. They also prioritize morning selling hours when vegetables are freshest and consumer demand peaks. Many vendors prefer permanent stalls—either in markets or in front of their homes—because such locations support operational stability, reduce rental expenses, and enable them to build a loyal customer base. These findings are consistent with Hendratmi (2022), who reports that female micro-entrepreneurs often select business locations near their homes to manage dual household and economic roles more efficiently.

3.2.2 Pricing Strategies

Vegetable vendors employ dynamic and adaptive pricing strategies influenced by supplier prices and market fluctuations. They typically apply fixed pricing for efficiency but shift to bargaining—especially for vegetables with declining freshness—to avoid losses. Although approaches differ among vendors, these strategies demonstrate a practical understanding of cost structures and market dynamics. Ekaputri et al. (2025) argue that such adaptive price-setting practices are a common feature among women in informal micro-enterprises, enabling them to maintain competitiveness in uncertain markets.

3.2.3 Product Diversification and Innovation

Although most vendors still sell traditionally—without digital technology—they engage in basic forms of innovation, such as diversifying products by adding cooking spices (e.g., chilies, garlic, turmeric, ginger) to meet household needs in one stop. They also maintain product freshness by arranging vegetables neatly and separating those that begin to wilt. While technological adoption remains minimal, this ability to diversify and present products well reflects adaptive micro-enterprise behavior, which Hendratmi (2022) notes as crucial for sustaining informal women-led businesses.

3.3 Challenges Encountered by Vegetable Vendors

3.3.1 Limited Capital

Capital constraints remain the most significant challenge for small-scale vegetable vendors. Many rely solely on personal savings or spousal financial support due to limited access to credit from cooperatives or microfinance institutions. This condition restricts their ability to increase inventory, upgrade equipment, or expand operations. Rozalinda (2024) confirms that women in the informal sector often remain unbanked, which increases their vulnerability to economic instability and limits opportunities for business growth.

3.3.2 Price Instability of Raw Materials

Vendors must continually adapt to price fluctuations from suppliers. Some adjust stock quantities and selling prices daily, while others maintain long-term supplier relationships to stabilize inventory. However, frequent price adjustments may reduce customer interest, given the sensitivity of traditional market consumers. This reflects a core characteristic of informal micro-enterprises: vulnerability to volatile market conditions (Hendratmi, 2022).

3.3.3 Double Burden of Domestic and Economic Responsibilities

Women vendors manage dual responsibilities—household duties and business operations. They adopt time-management strategies such as completing domestic tasks before selling or operating directly from home to monitor family activities simultaneously. Family support, especially from spouses and children, plays a crucial role in reducing workload and enabling business continuity. Jumiyanti et al. (2024) highlight that such household collaboration is essential for sustaining micro-enterprises led by women in informal economies.

3.4 Implications

Overall, the study underscores the pivotal economic role of women in informal trading sectors. Their strategies, resilience, and financial management practices significantly enhance household economic security. The findings reinforce the need for policies that expand women's access to capital, provide financial literacy training, and strengthen institutional support—key elements for empowering female micro-entrepreneurs in Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that female vegetable vendors in Katangka play a pivotal role in sustaining and enhancing household economic stability. Their income contributions extend beyond supplementary support, functioning as a primary source of financial security for daily needs, children's education, and long-term household planning. The findings also reveal that these women exhibit practical financial literacy by implementing simple yet effective financial management practices, including daily record-keeping, separating household and business finances, and prioritizing strategic spending. These practices reinforce their dual role as income earners and household financial managers.

Furthermore, the study identifies a range of adaptive business strategies used by the vendors, including strategic location selection, flexible pricing mechanisms, and product diversification to maintain competitiveness in fluctuating market conditions. Despite operating within resource-constrained environments, the women display resilience and managerial capacity characteristic of micro-entrepreneurs in the informal sector. However, they continue to face structural challenges, particularly limited access to capital, exposure to price volatility, and the persistent double burden of domestic and economic responsibilities.

The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to strengthen women's economic empowerment in informal markets. Expanding access to microfinance, enhancing financial literacy and business management training, and improving institutional support will help increase their economic resilience and business sustainability. Beyond its practical implications, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on women's economic roles in informal economies, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts.

Future research should explore the integration of digital technologies, gender norms within household decision-making, and comparative analyses across regions to deepen understanding of women's entrepreneurship in informal market structures.

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