

# The role of women in the informal sector economic in the peri urban area of Makassar

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## Abstract

This study aims to determine the role of women in the informal sector in improving family welfare in Sumanna Village. This study employed qualitative research, analyzed and written descriptively. Data collection techniques used observation, interviews, and documentation. The results indicate that: In addition to their roles as wives and mothers, women also play a role in assisting their husbands in earning a living, such as selling fish at the market, selling cakes, selling mixed goods, and other informal activities. Women who play a role in improving family welfare in Sumanna Village are helping to increase family income which is not comparable to the amount of income earned by their husbands with the needs of the family and the choice to work to help their husbands in earning a living is a choice that must be made. Before deciding to work, they have also obtained permission from their husbands, they help each other, support each other's work and continue to carry out their obligations as wives and mothers at home.

## Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran perempuan di sektor informal dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan keluarga di Desa Sumanna. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, dianalisis dan ditulis secara deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: Selain perannya sebagai istri dan ibu, perempuan juga berperan membantu suami dalam mencari nafkah, seperti berjualan ikan di pasar, berjualan kue, berjualan aneka barang, dan kegiatan informal lainnya. Perempuan yang berperan dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan keluarga di Desa Sumanna adalah membantu menambah pendapatan keluarga yang tidak sebanding dengan jumlah pendapatan yang diperoleh suami dengan kebutuhan keluarga dan pilihan untuk bekerja membantu suami dalam mencari nafkah merupakan pilihan yang harus dilakukan. Sebelum memutuskan untuk bekerja, mereka juga telah memperoleh izin dari suami, mereka saling membantu, mendukung pekerjaan satu sama lain dan tetap menjalankan kewajibannya sebagai istri dan ibu di rumah.*

## Kata Kunci

kesejahteraan; keluarga; perempuan; peri urban; sektor informal

# 1. Introduction

Role is a dynamic aspect of status. This means that if a person has exercised their rights and obligations in accordance with their position, then that person has fulfilled a role. The two are inseparable because they are interdependent, meaning there is no role without status and no status without role. Just as with position, each person can have various roles derived from their social patterns. This also means that these roles determine what they do for society and what opportunities society provides them. Roles are very important because they can regulate a person's behavior. In addition, roles enable a person to predict the actions of others within certain limits, allowing a person to adapt their own behavior to the behavior of those in their group (Budiman, 1985).

In general, in an ideal family, the father as the head of the family is the breadwinner, works outside the household (public sector) and generates income, while the mother plays a role in the household (domestic sector) as a caregiver and educator for her children and does not generate income. From a socio-cultural perspective, a wife who works in the public sector (earning a living) is considered to be able to damage household harmony because basically the one who works to earn a living is the husband while the wife is the mother for her children and takes care of household chores (Rauf, 2008).

The difference in meaning between the words "woman" and "female" in everyday linguistic contexts is unclear, especially for laypeople. To determine the position of each word, and to determine when to use "woman" and when to use "wanita," requires in-depth analysis. In Indonesian society, the word "woman" has experienced semantic degradation, or *peyarosi*, a decline in the value of a word's meaning, where its current meaning is inferior to its former meaning. The specific definition of "woman" is synonymous with biological sex differentiation (Dewi, 2012).

Women are humans who have reproductive organs, such as the uterus, and birth canals, have egg cells, have a vagina, and have tools for breastfeeding, all of which are permanently unchanged and have biological provisions or are often referred to as nature (God's provisions)." A similar thing was stated (Cota, 2024) from a biological perspective, women are often identified with easily broken vessels such as, delicate, weak and helpless. Culturally according to Nugroho, women are known to be gentle, beautiful, emotional and motherly. Meanwhile, in an etymological review according to Sudarwati and Jupriono the word woman has a fairly high value, not below but equal, even higher than the word man. Etymologically, the word "wanita" comes from the word "empu," meaning master, a skilled/powerful person, or head, head, or the greatest. The word "wanita" is also related to the word "ampu," meaning "support," "rule," "supporter," "safeguard," and even "wali." The word "mengampuh" means to hold back a fall or support a collapse; the word "mengampuh" means to rule (a country); and there is also "pengampuh," meaning to hold back, support, or savior. The word "wanita" is also closely rooted in the word "empuan." This word has been shortened to "puan," meaning a respectful term for women, as a counterpart to the word "Tuan," which is a term used for men (Ramadhani & Adiprabowo, 2023).

Women today have quite diverse roles, ranging from educators to careers. It cannot be denied that many women now play the role of men, providing for their families. The world of work, which has always been considered the domain of men and the public realm, is beginning to gain new "inhabitants," namely women, who have always been assumed to "inhabit" the domestic realm, the "home" realm (Khairunnisak et al., 2023). Women's participation in the workforce has made a significant contribution to family welfare, particularly in the economic sphere. Women have two roles simultaneously: a domestic role, taking care of the household, and a public role, working outside the home or working to meet the needs of all family members. The number of women working in Indonesia and other countries will continue to increase, due to several factors such as increased educational opportunities for women, the success of family planning programs, the abundance of

childcare centers, and technological advances that allow women to handle both family and work issues. Furthermore, increased participation in the workforce also affects the well-being of women themselves and their families. Sajogyo stated that mothers try earning (working) is due to the mother's desire to be independent in the economic sector, namely trying to finance her living needs and the needs of others who are her dependents with her own income (Sajogyo, 1982). There is a family need to increase family income, due to the husband's low income and high demands for needs, another possibility is the increasing breadth of job opportunities that can absorb female labor, including the growth of handicrafts and other industries carried out by women (Abdullah, 1997).

In addition to the factors mentioned above, there are many other reasons that make women work, one of which is poverty. Poverty is a fact where a person or group of people live below or below the conditions of a decent living as a human being due to the inability to meet their living needs. According to Mencher, poverty is a symptom of a decline in the ability of a person or group of people or region so that it affects the life support capacity of a person or group of people, where at one point in time they are clearly unable to earn a decent living (Ponirah et al., 2024).

To provide an overview of the informal sector in Indonesia, Hidayat outlined its characteristics as follows. Business activities are not well organized, as the emerging business units do not utilize the facilities or institutions available in the formal sector (Effendi, 1995). Generally, these business units do not have business permits. Business activity patterns are irregular, both in terms of location and working hours. Generally, government policies to assist economically disadvantaged groups do not extend to this sector. Business units easily move from one sub-sector to another. The technology used is traditional. Capital and business turnover are relatively small, so the scale of operations is also relatively small; formal education is not required because the necessary education is obtained through on-the-job experience. In general, these businesses are self-employed and, if employed, employ family members. The source of business capital generally comes from personal savings or from informal financial institutions. Production or service output is primarily consumed in low-income cities or villages, but sometimes also in middle-income areas (Yustika & Baks, 2015).

Most women in the informal sector, working as small traders, come from lower-class backgrounds and face economic hardship. The inability of the family breadwinner (husband) to provide for their family's needs forces women to enter the public sector to generate additional income. This situation forces women to work and earn money to supplement their family's needs. Meanwhile, middle-class women tend to enter the informal sector due to a desire to diversify their family's income and capital accumulation strategies (Yonariza & Noer, 2024).

In the context of the informal economy, there is an interesting phenomenon worth examining in depth, namely related to family life, especially in Sumanna Village, Tamalate District, located on the outskirts of Makassar City, where women help earn a living as informal workers. They work as cake sellers, vegetable sellers, and tailors. The husbands in this village generally work as construction workers and farmers, which makes the family's needs are not met. This makes women work, namely helping to earn a living for the family as a precaution in case their husbands do not earn income because livelihoods as construction workers and farmers are speculative activities and are bound by the seasons. Therefore, farmers who are constrained by the dry season or construction workers who do not receive orders cannot be assured of getting a steady income. Based on this description, the researcher is interested in finding out more about the role of women in Sumanna village who work in the informal sector in supporting household needs.

## 2. Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative research method. According to Purnomo qualitative research is research whose target is interrelated phenomena in a functional relationship, which as a whole forms a unified and comprehensive

unit (Rahman, 2022). The importance of the context of the observed phenomena is emphasized. The informant selection technique used a purposive sampling technique, determining the informant criteria: housewives who had worked as informal workers for at least one year (Ahmadin, 2013). After determining the informants, the researcher conducted interviews with informants deemed capable of providing the desired and required information. The interview results were then processed and used as data to answer the research questions.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1. Informal Economic Activities in the Review of Structural Functional Theory

Recognizing the existence of diversity in social life. This diversity is the primary source of societal structure and determines the diversity of functions according to one's position within the system (Ahmadin et al., 2025). For example, in a social organization, some members are capable of being leaders, others are secretaries or treasurers, and others are ordinary members. These differences in function are aimed at achieving the organization's goals, not for individual interests. The structure and function of an organization are inseparable from the influence of culture, norms, and values that underlie the societal system (Ahmadin, 2015).

Regarding the role of women in the informal sector, followers of this theory describe pre-industrial societies integrated within a social system. Men were hunters and women were gatherers. As hunters, men spent most of their time outside the home and were responsible for bringing food for the family. Women's roles were more limited to the home, specifically in reproductive matters such as bearing, caring for, and breastfeeding children. This division of labor functioned well and successfully created a stable society (Suyanto, 2014).

Therefore, it is not surprising that in a capitalist society, the "sex industry" can be accepted as normal. What also strengthens the application of this theory is because modern-capitalist society, according to Michel Foucault and Heidi Hartman (Fujiati, 2016), tends to accommodate a system of division of labor based on gender differences. As a result, the position of women will remain lower and in a marginal position, while the position of men is higher and occupies a central position (Faried et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the prevailing stereotype that women working deviates from the true nature of women who should be at home, caring for and guiding children, presents an obstacle for women traders. It is the strategic basis for meeting their livelihoods that allows these women to trade and enter the informal sector. In relation to family income, women trading is a dual livelihood strategy undertaken by households to meet the needs of all members. This automatically increases women's productive role. These women traders create a new identity for themselves, not only as mothers but also as the mainstay of the family's income (Boserup, 1984).

#### 3.2. The Role of Women in the Informal Sector in Improving Family Welfare

The theoretical basis for the informal sector has been put forward by many experts. Activities in the informal sector, such as in Indonesia, are very beneficial. What is often less than satisfactory is the definition of the informal sector. The informal sector is characterized by: irregular activity patterns, untouched by government regulations, small capital and turnover in daily terms, unstable locations and not tied to companies, generally serving low-income groups, not requiring special expertise and skills, generally using a small number of workers from within the family or from the same area of origin, not implementing a bookkeeping system, and a tendency for a fairly high level of job and residential mobility (Powatu, 2024).

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) classifies employment status in the informal sector as self-employed, employed with casual or unpaid labor, casual non-agricultural workers, and unpaid workers. Increasingly developed cities will open up

opportunities for informal sector actors to enter and populate their corners. They are typically located in busy centers and economic centers that create demand for the products and services they offer (Syukria, 2023).

The informal sector serves as a safety valve for employment development in Indonesia due to its ability to absorb a large workforce. The informal sector easily accommodates workers not absorbed by the formal sector because working in the informal sector does not require the same stringent requirements as in the formal sector. Economic activities in the informal sector not only complement formal sector economic activities but also serve as a link between economic activities that cannot be achieved or are not yet accessible in the formal sector. The existence of the informal sector in the national economy has two contradictory sides. While the national economy was still sluggish due to the impact of the economic crisis, the informal sector was able to survive. In fact, its existence was able to provide a livelihood for millions of victims of layoffs due to the decline of national industry. The informal sector plays a crucial role in economic life, particularly in absorbing labor in rural and urban areas, where the informal sector is defined as a business sector that does not require a permit. According to Hasel V.J Moir and Soedjito Wirosarjo, the informal sector is a field of work that is not affected by regulations and a large number of those who work are family members, their number and working days are not determined and the workplace is temporary (Remi, 2024).

Women today are no longer just life partners or household managers, but also contribute to household economic resilience. This makes women's role in supporting their families' lives and livelihoods increasingly evident. Women not only work and care for their families, but many also work outside the home in the informal sector. Due to low levels of education and the difficulty of finding work, women prefer to work in the informal sector.

An interview with Mrs. Saheria (29), a mother of two children and a traveling clothes salesperson, stated:

"I decided to sell clothes around Sumanna village to help meet my family's needs. My job means that as a mother, I leave my children at home, but I have to be smart about managing my time. Fortunately, my husband always helps take care of the children by preparing their school supplies, as both of my children are still in elementary school and require more attention from us as parents. Working as a clothes seller has brought quite a change to my family, including helping meet daily family needs, participating in social gatherings (arisan) and saving money, which can contribute to the family's well-being through working as a clothes seller.

In addition, an interview was also conducted with Mrs. Fatmawati (34) who also has 2 children and works as a traveling cake and yellow rice seller. In the interview, she revealed that:

I sell cakes and yellow rice around my house and I have been doing it for 4 years. I sell cakes and yellow rice around to help support the family's economy, because my husband's income is still not enough to cover other needs. My husband works as a farmer and only works other people's fields, having to adjust to weather conditions, so I decided to sell cakes and sell yellow rice. Selling cakes and selling yellow rice is quite helpful in the family income. The good thing about selling cakes and yellow rice is that in addition to selling some, there is also some provided for my husband and children to eat, and a portion of the profits from trading is set aside for savings. Usually I sell cakes in the morning at 6:00-8:00 AM, at dawn I have prepared everything for the merchandise with the help of my husband and children, as well as school supplies for the children. Sometimes my children also help sell on Sundays when they are off school.

Based on the interviews with the informants above, we can conclude that women's roles, beyond being wives and mothers, also include assisting their husbands in earning a living, such as selling fish at the market, selling cakes, selling mixed goods, and other informal jobs. Women's informal employment also provides an additional source of income or income to help the family meet daily needs when their husbands are away from work (Damaiyanti & Hidayah, 2023). Women's

involvement in supporting their husbands in earning a living can contribute to improving the family's well-being through work in the informal sector. The socio-cultural life of a region provides a unique perspective on the local community. Therefore, each community possesses its own unique characteristics. This is due to the social environment in which the community operates, as a social unit, which fosters various behaviors that become habits through repeated repetition.

Women involved in economic activities make unique contributions to both economic and social development. Several studies indicate that women spend ninety percent of their income on the health and education of their families and communities. By contributing to household finances and community development, women are able to earn more than just a living wage; they also gain a respected position in society. Equally important within the household, they are also able to control issues such as family planning and prevent early child marriage. Empowering women's potential, both economically and intellectually, will be highly effective for community and national development (Khairunnisa et al., 2022).

## 4. Kesimpulan

Women who play a role in improving family welfare in Sumanna Village, Tamalate District, Makassar City are to help increase family income which is not comparable to the amount of income earned by the husband with the needs that exist in the family and the choice to work to help the husband in earning a living is a choice that must be made. Before deciding to work they have also obtained permission from their husbands, they help each other, support each other's work and continue to carry out their obligations as a wife and a mother at home even though they have had side jobs outside the home.

Women's roles, beyond being wives and mothers, also include helping their husbands earn a living, such as selling fish at the market, selling cakes, selling mixed goods, and other informal jobs. The advantage of women working informally is that they can earn extra income or help their families meet their daily needs when their husbands are away from work. Women's involvement in helping their husbands earn a living can help improve the family's well-being through work in the informal sector.

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