



Women's Empowerment in the Family Economy: The Role of Informal Education as a Catalyst for Gender Justice and Equality

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of informal education in empowering women in the rural informal sector, thereby improving family economic conditions and promoting gender equality. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, the research was conducted in the Menganti District, Gresik Regency, involving women working in informal sectors. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings reveal that informal education through skills training, such as salted egg production and coconut shell charcoal processing, successfully enhanced women's technical skills, increased family income, and strengthened their self-confidence. Informal education also fostered social solidarity within the community, although women continued to face the double burden of balancing domestic responsibilities and economic activities. These results emphasize that informal education is not only a means of improving economic capacity but also catalyzes a shift in social values toward justice and gender equality. Women's empowerment through education must be accompanied by broader social structural changes and sustainable policy support to achieve inclusive and equitable development goals.

Keywords: informal, women's empowerment, family economy, gender equality

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INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, the division of roles between men and women in many Indonesian families still shows strong traditional patterns. Women, or wives, are generally responsible for domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and caring for children. (Acharya, 2024). Meanwhile, men or husbands are more often the primary breadwinners. They are responsible for public affairs, due to the view that men's responsibilities are heavier and more socially valuable. (Acharya, 2024; Vargün, 2016).

This leads to inequality in many aspects of life, including access to employment, performance rewards, and participation in politics. Women often receive lower wages than men and have limited access to strategic positions in the public sphere. (Qian & Sayer, 2016). Even when women undertake dual roles, both as workers and homemakers, their contributions are often not recognized financially or socially. (Greenstein, 1996; Zuo & Tang, 2000).



Socio-cultural factors play a significant role in maintaining this inequality. In patriarchal societies, such as many communities in Indonesia, men are often perceived as superior and more entitled to authoritative positions, including within the family. (Oláh et al., 2021; Vargün, 2016). Value systems based on paternal lineage reinforce social structures that prioritize men in decision-making. (Acharya, 2024).

However, changes are slowly taking place, especially with the increasing participation of women in the workforce. This has led to the formation of dual-income families and has gradually shifted traditional roles. (Qian & Sayer, 2016; Krausz, 1986). However, although women are now more economically active, they still bear the main burden of household chores. (Greenstein, 1996). In a broader context, this inequality in the division of roles also affects family dynamics and marital satisfaction. In societies where gender equality is valued, inequities in the division of domestic labor tend to decrease satisfaction in domestic relationships. (Zuo & Tang, 2000). Therefore, it is essential to promote social change through education, policy, and gender awareness campaigns so that the roles of men and women in the household can become more equal. (Oláh et al., 2021).

Some data indicate that a disparity in opportunities persists between men and women, particularly in education. For example, simple statistics show that 99.5% of STM students are male, while 99% of SMK students are female. For some people, this may seem natural given the differences in interests or career choices. However, this condition is inseparable from social constructions that compartmentalize gender roles, assigning specific roles that are considered appropriate for women and men (Hill & King, 1995). This demonstrates how social norms and cultural expectations shape children's educational preferences from an early age, which then impacts their future career paths and economic opportunities.

Education inequality between women and men is also reflected in the level of quality of education they receive. Data shows that almost 20% of women are illiterate, while for men the figure is less than 10%. In addition, only 71.4% of primary school girls continue to junior high school, slightly lower than 72.6% of boys. This trend continues at the transition from junior high school to senior high school, where 72.7% of female students continue, compared to 76.3% of male students. At higher levels, the gap widens, with only 44.7% of female high school graduates continuing to tertiary institutions, compared to 51.4% of male graduates. (Evans et al., 2021). This data suggests that, despite high enrollment rates in primary education, women face greater structural barriers to progressing to higher levels of education.

This shows that women have less access to education than men, and this inequality has profound implications for future economic opportunities. Of the many students who do not continue their education, the majority are women. Even after completing their education, women continue to face barriers in the workforce. Female labor force participation in Indonesia is only around 53%, much lower than Thailand's 72% (Minasyan et al., 2019). This finding aligns with the observation that women's education is closely linked to increased labor force participation and economic growth. Inequality in access to education weakens women's contribution to the national economy and widens the income gap.

More broadly, the education gap between women and men remains a persistent global issue that is relevant today. Despite general progress, women in many developing countries still lag behind men in education. In countries with low education levels in the 1960s, the initial widening of the gap was offset as more boys attended school, but it began to narrow as female participation increased (Evans et al., 2021). This demonstrates that social change requires a significant amount of time and consistent effort, particularly in altering cultural norms that hinder women's participation in education.

The factors that influence this gap are complex. In developing countries, discrimination within the family, unfair sharing of resources, and traditional social values widen the gap between men and women in education. (Kingdon, 2002). In developed countries, on the other hand, the trend is reversing: fewer men now pursue higher education than women, with an average of only 45% of male students in OECD countries. (Stoet & Geary, 2020; Lundberg, 2020).

This difference highlights that gender norms play a significant role in both contexts, albeit with varying impacts.

The education gap also has a long-term impact on economic and social inequality. Despite the growing number of women with higher education, they still earn less than men with similar qualifications. (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007; Mandel & Rotman, 2021). This suggests that narrowing the education gap is not enough; there must also be simultaneous efforts to address discrimination in the labor market. Moreover, women's education has been shown to bring far-reaching social benefits, such as reduced child mortality, improved family health, and more inclusive economic growth. (Minasyan et al., 2019). Therefore, improving access to and the quality of education for women is not only a matter of social justice, but also a strategic investment in national development.

In the fight against discrimination and the pursuit of an inclusive society, education holds great potential to change mindsets, eliminate gender stereotypes, and provide equal opportunities for all. Education not only serves to transfer knowledge, but also as a tool of social transformation that changes perceptions about the roles of men and women in society. (Lata & Dahiya, 2024; Singh, 2022). There are several theories regarding gender equality, namely, Nurture, Nature, and Equilibrium theories. In Nurture theory, it is emphasized that gender equality is the result of social and cultural constructions that ultimately lead to different roles for men and women. Thus, social change through education becomes significant in deconstructing old stereotypes and building more equal patterns of relationships.

Women, through empowering education, are directed to develop initiatives to improve the welfare of themselves, their families, and their communities. The concept of women's empowerment seeks to enhance economic independence, promote critical awareness, and encourage women's active participation in various fields of development (Ahmadi, 2020; Essien & Adelekan, 2021). Informal education, such as entrepreneurship and skills training, provides women with new knowledge that strengthens their capacity to contribute to the family economy, so they are no longer entirely dependent on their husband's income (Ahmadi, 2020; Amina, 2021). With these skills, women can open independent businesses, increase family income, and expand opportunities to self-actualize in the community.

In the economic field, women are still often marginalized, even though many of them act as the main support of the family, especially in meeting the food needs of their children. A woman who also earns additional income or who is the head of the family due to widowhood often experiences higher poverty rates than men from the same group (Essien & Adelekan, 2021). Working women tend to allocate a higher proportion of their income to basic family needs than men. Consequently, the higher a woman's income, the less likely her children are to experience malnutrition, poor health, or loss of access to education. (Srivastava, 2025; Shah, 2024). This emphasizes the importance of women's economic empowerment not only for individual well-being but also for the social health of the next generation.

In rural areas, women's work is complex, as they perform both household duties and productive work in gardens, rice fields, or through trading, often in collaboration with their families. As a result, women often need to have extra energy to fulfill these two roles. Women who are farm laborers or factory workers often receive lower wages than men, a form of gender injustice that persists. (Amina, 2021). However, many women who manage home industries have managed to increase their family income, sometimes even surpassing that of their husbands. However, social respect for working women is still low; women are still seen as "weak", less productive, and domestic roles are still fully assigned to them, without considering the double workload they bear (Essien & Adelekan, 2021).

The concept of gender itself refers to the differences in traits, behaviors, roles, positions, and duties attached to men and women by society socially and culturally. Because it is shaped by local social and cultural factors, gender is dynamic, changing according to time and place (Shah, 2024). Gender injustice, which is the distinction, exclusion, or favoritism based on gender, causes women to be hampered in accessing their fundamental rights in the economic, political,

social, and cultural fields. In the context of nation-building, gender equality is no longer an option but a necessity. Women's equal participation with men in all sectors of life is an absolute prerequisite for achieving sustainable social, economic, and political progress. (Srivastava, 2025). Therefore, empowering women through education should be a priority agenda in every national development program.

Although many studies have examined the importance of informal education and skills training in enhancing women's economic independence, most of these studies are general and have not specifically highlighted the context of women in the rural informal sector. Informal education is known to increase women's confidence, life aspirations, and contribution to the family economy. (Karki & Xheneti, 2018; Essien & Adelekan, 2021) However, its impact on poverty alleviation and changes in gender relations is still limited, especially if it is not accompanied by support for formal resources and adequate legal protection. (Rana et al., 2024; Jayaweera, 1997). In addition, few studies have explored how internal family dynamics change when women contribute economically, particularly in terms of income management, their influence on children's education, and shifts in gender values within the family.

In this context, women's empowerment through informal education in rural communities is essential to be studied more deeply. This is because women who work in the informal sector, such as farm laborers, small traders, or home industry workers, not only contribute to increasing family income but also play a central role in educating children and maintaining the socio-economic stability of the household. The reality, however, is that despite their economic contributions, social attitudes towards women remain biased; women are still perceived as inferior, with inherent domestic responsibilities. (Gupta, 2025; Amina, 2021). These challenges suggest that informal education alone is not enough without a transformation of values and broader social structures.

This research presents a new approach by deeply exploring the experiences of women in the informal sector in rural areas, especially in the Menganti Sub-district, Gresik. Through a phenomenological approach, this research aims to understand how informal education, such as training in salted egg processing and coconut shell charcoal making, not only enhances economic capabilities but also fosters self-confidence, community solidarity, and a new awareness of gender roles within the family. This focus on micro changes is crucial for understanding how informal education can catalyze broader structural changes, promoting gender equality and equity from the grassroots level. Thus, this research is expected to enrich the literature on community-based women's empowerment and make a practical contribution to the development of women's empowerment policies in the informal sector.

Based on the above problems, researchers will focus on discussing and examining the role of informal education, particularly among women who continue to follow traditional patterns of education within their families, while also working to provide for their children and contribute to the family's economic well-being. The purpose of this research is to explain and understand the role of women who are not only seen as objects but are also the subjects of development, especially in the context of promoting gender equality to achieve justice.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically a phenomenological research design, which focuses on providing an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of individuals or groups within a particular context. The phenomenological approach aims to describe and understand the meaning of life experiences from the participants' perspective, rather than from the perspective of researchers or existing theories (Davidsen, 2013; Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). In the process, researchers attempt to suspend prejudice (*epoché*) and perform a phenomenological reduction, which aims to reveal the purest meaning of experience as experienced by the subject (Englander, 2016; Sousa, 2014). The researcher also seeks to identify

the core meaning structures (invariant structures) within each participant's experience to gain a deeper and more profound understanding (Sousa, 2014).

The data sources in this study are women who hold jobs to assist the head of the family, to improve the family's economic situation. The research subjects were selected from several villages in Menganti Sub-district, Gresik Regency, with the primary criterion being that they worked in the informal sector, such as factory laborers, maracangan traders, or small entrepreneurs at home, and were neither civil servants nor permanent employees in companies. This selection of subjects took into account the relevance of the research objectives to explore women's experiences in their dual roles, both as economic workers and household managers.

The data collection techniques used in this study included in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with women working in the informal sector to explore their lived experiences in managing both domestic and economic responsibilities. Field observations allowed the researchers to directly observe the activities, interactions, and learning processes within the community. Documentation, such as training materials, photographs, and relevant reports, was also gathered to complement and support the primary data sources.

The data were then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. (Miles et al., 2014), which involves three key steps: data reduction, where raw data were selected, simplified, and focused to highlight important aspects; data display, through thematic categorization and narrative presentation; and conclusion drawing and verification, where interpretations were made and tested for consistency with the field data. To ensure data validity, the researchers employed several strategies. This included source triangulation, by comparing information from different participants and field documents; member checking, by returning preliminary findings to key informants for confirmation and clarification; and maintaining an audit trail, which involved systematically documenting the entire research process to ensure transparency and traceability. Additionally, researcher reflexivity was applied by bracketing personal assumptions (epoché) and maintaining objectivity throughout the data collection and analysis process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research was conducted in several villages in the Menganti Sub-district, Gresik Regency, East Java. The research subjects were women who held jobs to assist their family's head, aiming to improve the family's economic situation. The types of work include domestic workers, small entrepreneurs, and traders in traditional markets. The selection of these subjects focuses on women who work in the informal sector and do not hold the status of civil servants or permanent employees in companies.

The results of observations and interviews indicate that women in the Menganti area play a significant role in supporting their family's economy. They also expressed hope for the development of local potential to improve community welfare. This was shown in an interview with Mrs. BD, a housewife who also sells snacks, who stated:

"Saya hanya seorang ibu rumah tangga yang membutuhkan kegiatan yang dapat meningkatkan ekonomi untuk keperluan sehari-hari. Banyak potensi daerah sini yang dapat dikembangkan" (BD, 06 Juli 2024).

"I am just a housewife who needs activities that can improve the economy for daily needs. There is much potential here that can be developed" (Mrs. BD, July 06, 2024).

In addition to Mrs. BD, Mrs. BL, a grocery trader in the village market, also emphasized the importance of skills training support for their small businesses. Mrs. BL said:

"Kalau ada pelatihan, misalnya cara mengemas produk atau membuat olahan makanan baru, pasti usaha saya bisa lebih berkembang. Sekarang ini, kami jalan sendiri-sendiri, belajar dari pengalaman saja" (BL, 11 Juli 2024).

"If there is training, for example, on how to package products or make new food preparations, my business can grow. Right now, we are running on our own, learning from experience" (Mrs. BL, July 11, 2024)

Meanwhile, Mrs. BR, a factory worker who also helps her husband's farm, shared the challenges she faces in dividing her time between domestic work and earning a living:

"Pagi-pagi saya kerja ke pabrik, pulang sore harus ngurus rumah, anak-anak, dan kadang bantu suami di sawah. Capek, tapi ya harus dijalani demi keluarga" (BR, 14 Juli 2024).

"I work at the factory in the morning, come home in the afternoon, and take care of the house, children, and sometimes help my husband in the fields. It is tiring, but I have to do it for my family" (Mrs. BR, July 14, 2024).

The interviews show that women in the Menganti sub-district not only contribute economically but also continue to fulfill their domestic roles. This condition highlights the double burden they bear, while also demonstrating great potential for capacity building among village women if provided with the proper support through informal education and skills training.

Skills training, such as salted egg processing and coconut shell charcoal making, are concrete examples of informal education that have successfully improved women's abilities in the Menganti sub-district. Through learning activities with residents who have already achieved success, the community not only acquires new skills but also conducts various trials to produce higher-quality products. One of the innovations introduced is the use of brick soil in the process of making salted eggs, which is known to provide more optimal taste results and product durability compared to the traditional method using clay. As a future development, the community identified a vacant lot for use in duck farming, which would support a more sustainable supply of raw materials for salted egg production.



Figure 4.1. Vacant land intended for duck farming activities

An explanation of this experience was obtained from an interview with Mrs. BI, a housewife who actively participated in the salted egg making training. She said:

"Waktu itu pernah mencoba merendam telur bebek menggunakan tanah liat dan menggunakan garam beryodium karena berfikir lebih praktis menggunakan garam lembut, dan ternyata hasilnya kurang baik. Telurnya memang asin, tapi bagian dalamnya cepat sekali berair, jadi tidak bertahan lama. Selain itu, warna kuning telurnya berubah menjadi kecoklatan, tidak cerah seperti seharusnya" (BI, 11 Agustus 2024).

"At that time, I tried soaking duck eggs using clay and iodized salt because I thought it was more practical to use soft salt, and the results were not good. The eggs were salty, but the inside became watery very quickly, so they did not last long. In addition, the color of the yolk turns brownish, not bright like it should be" (Mrs. BI, August 11, 2024).

The image below shows duck eggs that have not been washed with citric acid, along with a set of eggs that have been soaked for one week. This process was carried out as part of a training program on salted egg production, involving local housewives in Menganti Village. Proper soaking techniques using natural materials, such as brick soil and coarse salt, have been shown to enhance both the flavor and shelf life of eggs.



Figure 4.2. Unwashed duck eggs and eggs soaked for one week.

In addition to Mrs. BI, Mrs. BL, one of the trainees who now regularly produces salted eggs for sale, added the importance of practical skills in maintaining product quality. She said:

"Kalau mau hasil telur asinnya bagus, harus telaten. Misalnya, mencatat tanggal mulai rendaman supaya nggak lupa. Kalau kelamaan, rasanya bisa terlalu asin atau malah rusak. Saya sekarang selalu kasih tanggal di ember rendamannya supaya tahu kapan waktunya diangkat" (BL, 15 Agustus 2024).

"If you want good, salted egg results, you have to be careful. For example, keep track of the start date of the marinade so you do not forget. If you take too long, the taste can be too salty or even spoiled. I now always put a date on the soaking bucket, so I know when to remove it" (Mrs. BL, August 15, 2024).

From the results of these interviews, it can be concluded that the skill of making salted eggs depends not only on the materials used but also on the discipline, accuracy, and diligence with which it is implemented. This experience demonstrates that through informal education that is practical and based on direct experience, women in Menganti village can improve the quality of their production and potentially strengthen their families' economies.

According to Ms. BL, the duck egg soaking technique using brick soil and krosok salt has been proven to increase the durability of the salted eggs produced. This method was later adopted by many other members of the village community who attended similar training courses. In an interview, Ms. BL explained:

"Perendaman telur yang dilakukan menggunakan tanah batu bata dan juga garam krosok mampu menjadikan telur asin bertahan lama dan tidak mudah berair. Biasanya telur itu saya simpan di suhu ruangan bertahan sekitar satu minggu, sedangkan kalau saya simpan di kulkas dengan suhu rata-rata mampu bertahan sampai satu bulan" (BL, 23 Agustus 2024).

"Soaking eggs using brick soil and also krosok salt can make salted eggs last longer and not easily watery. Usually, I store the egg at room temperature, which lasts about

a week, while if I store it in the refrigerator with an average temperature, it can last up to one month" (Mrs. BL, August 23, 2024)

Community empowerment activities in the Menganti sub-district extend beyond salted egg production. Furthermore, the community, especially women, are also taught the skill of processing coconut shell waste into coconut shell charcoal. This product has relatively high selling value and can serve as an additional source of new income for the family. This training program demonstrates that, with a small quantity of innovation and creativity, previously useless waste can be transformed into valuable economic items. The following figure shows one of the practical sessions during the coconut shell charcoal-making training, illustrating how local women utilized waste to create valuable economic products.



Figure 4.3. The process of making coconut shell charcoal by local participants

In addition to technical skills, the learning process also emphasizes the importance of building mutual trust between residents. This trust is considered crucial for strengthening community cooperation and recognizing everyone as a valuable part of local development. The joint learning activities aim not only to increase income but also to create a space for knowledge exchange, strengthen solidarity, and foster motivation to improve living conditions.

This empowerment activity highlights the similarities in the goals and mindsets of village women, namely a strong desire to improve their businesses, increase self-confidence, and strengthen their roles as mothers, as well as provide economic support for their families. The support of strong family values is a crucial moral foundation for women in fulfilling their roles, making this empowerment process more meaningful and sustainable.

Based on the research results, several things become research findings, among others:

1. Every woman who works to help her husband has a passion to build a better family in the future as a parental responsibility.
2. Any work or independent business carried out can increase insight, skills, and independence as a worker, even if it is a woman.
3. The income or proceeds from his business are always prioritized to build a more decent family continuity and have better hopes.

In the education and training sector, education is the most important right but is often neglected for women. To advance women's potential in the informal sector, they need to be skilled in managing the family economy. Women are more skilled in managing the family economy in the village. The informal sector in rural areas is expanding. The emergence of small businesses, such as weaving, animal husbandry, and petty trading, is a sign of the development of the informal sector. These businesses, which women mostly do, are used to supplement family income.

Discussion

1. The Role of Informal Education in Women's Economic Empowerment

Informal education in the Menganti sub-district has proven to be an effective means of empowering women, especially in improving the family's economic capacity. Through various skills training, such as salted egg making and coconut shell charcoal processing, women gain practical knowledge that can be directly applied in their daily lives. The results show that these activities not only improve technical skills but also build confidence and solidarity among village women. This is in line with the opinion of (Ahmadi, 2020) and (Essien & Adelekan, 2021) Informal education provides women with new knowledge, experience, and skills that encourage family economic independence.

As revealed by Mrs. BI, the training on making salted eggs using the soaking method with brick soil and krosok salt produces products of better quality and greater durability. This demonstrates that practical skills acquired through informal education have a tangible impact on enhancing the quality of production, which in turn affects the economic well-being of families. (Ahmadi, 2020). Additionally, the training on processing coconut shell waste into charcoal also opened up new opportunities to increase family income. This activity shows how informal education can transform waste into a new source of economic value, as confirmed by (Essien & Adelekan, 2021) Informal education improves women's management skills and business sustainability.

This is also supported by the findings of Benshak et al. (2024), which highlight the importance of community collaboration and broader access to skills training in overcoming the social and economic barriers faced by women. Thus, informal education in the Menganti sub-district provides concrete evidence that women's empowerment through practical training contributes not only to family economic growth but also to women's increased confidence and independence in society, as confirmed by Duque & Moreno (2022).

2. Women's Double Burden: Between Economic and Domestic Roles

Despite gaining economic opportunities through informal education, women in Menganti still do not give up their domestic roles. The results of the interview with Mrs. BR illustrate this condition, where women must divide their time between working in the factory, caring for their families, and assisting with family farming activities. This reality reinforces the view that rural women still experience a double burden, as expressed by (Greenstein, 1996) Women's involvement in the economic sector does not automatically reduce their domestic burden. This phenomenon is also confirmed in various studies, such as those by (Panani, 2021), (Khikmawati, 2020), and (Yarsiah & Azmi, 2020), which states that women in rural areas often have to carry out productive roles outside the home while still fulfilling reproductive responsibilities, such as caring for children, managing the household, and supporting family agricultural work.

This double burden has a complex impact. On the one hand, women's contribution to family income can strengthen their bargaining position in household decision-making. (Khikmawati, 2020; Yarsiah & Azmi, 2020; Xhaho et al., 2021). However, on the other hand, this dual involvement also creates mental stress, fatigue, limited time for family, and a high risk of role conflict, especially if there is no fair division of domestic labor. (Nurhaliza & Achiriah, 2024; Sukumaran et al., 2024; Pardede et al., 2024). These studies highlight that women frequently face a dilemma between work demands and social expectations regarding their domestic roles.

Furthermore, although informal education has opened up women's access to engage in economic activities, patriarchal social and cultural structures remain a significant obstacle in realizing role equality in the domestic sphere (Yarsiah & Azmi, 2020). Social norms that place women as primarily responsible for household affairs are still firmly rooted, thus slowing down changes in gender roles at the family level. Therefore, equal economic participation needs to be balanced with changes in social norms through increased gender

awareness, spousal support in sharing domestic duties, and affirmative policies that encourage a more equitable division of labor (Sobri & Noviani, 2023).

This situation demonstrates that economic empowerment through informal education has a positive impact on women's economic capacity; however, it has not been fully effective in dismantling the traditional structure of gender roles. A more comprehensive approach is needed that not only focuses on economic aspects but also includes efforts to promote social transformation, aiming to achieve more substantial gender equality at the family and community levels.

3. Strengthening Women's Solidarity and Self-Confidence

Through learning together and participating in training activities, there are also positive social effects, including strengthening solidarity among women and growing self-confidence. Women who previously only engaged in domestic activities are now able to build new social networks, exchange experiences, and support each other in developing their businesses. This is in line with the opinion of (Lata & Dahiya, 2024) and (Singh, 2022) Informal education and training can broaden horizons, improve decision-making skills, and build women's confidence. Similar to this study, (Saugi & Sumarno, 2015) found that food processing training based on local ingredients significantly contributed to increasing women's knowledge, entrepreneurial skills, and income. Their findings further suggest that community-based empowerment programs, when supported by group collaboration and institutional partnerships, can lead to sustainable independence for women's home industries. The importance of trust among community members is also an interesting finding, as mentioned in the coconut shell charcoal production activity. This trust strengthens economic cooperation and accelerates the empowerment process at the local level.

4. Value Transformation and Gender Perspective Change

The research also revealed that through informal education, women began to experience a change in perspective about their roles in the family and community. Although patriarchal structures are still strong, skills training and success in small businesses provide space for women to self-actualize and gain better social recognition. This aligns with Nurture theory, which posits that gender roles are socially and culturally constructed and can therefore be altered through education (Hill & King, 1995; Evans et al., 2021). These findings are consistent with Sanuri (2020), who highlighted the effectiveness of outcome mapping-based empowerment approaches rooted in local wisdom. His study found that participatory planning and collaboration with traditional leaders, such as village chiefs and community figures, were key to behavioral changes and economic success among women in rural Papua. Such approaches reaffirm the importance of aligning empowerment strategies with local cultural contexts and involving diverse stakeholders from the outset. This value transformation shows that women's empowerment is not only an economic issue, but also a change in social awareness regarding the role of women in community development.

CONCLUSIONS

This research demonstrates that informal education plays a crucial role in empowering women in the rural informal sector, particularly in enhancing family economic stability and expanding women's roles in society. Through skills training, such as salted egg making and coconut shell charcoal production, women in the Menganti sub-district not only acquire practical skills but also build self-confidence, foster social solidarity, and increase their economic capacity in real terms. Informal education has successfully provided new opportunities for women to contribute to the family economy, expand their social networks, and form a more independent and innovative community. Despite improvements in economic aspects, women still face the double burden of domestic responsibilities and productive work. This condition indicates that economic empowerment through informal education has not yet fully

transformed the patriarchal social structure at the family level. Therefore, value transformation and changes in social norms regarding gender roles are an important part that must be pursued in parallel with economic empowerment programs. Empowering women through informal education not only aims to improve family welfare but is also a strategic step towards promoting social justice and broader gender equality. Community-based informal education and local wisdom have proven to be a catalyst for change but need to be supported by policies that favor women and sustainable support from various parties.

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