

THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL RESOURCE BASED MSMES IN SOUTH BURU REGENCY

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Abstract

based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in South Buru Regency as an archipelagic region of Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative case study approach supported by descriptive quantitative data. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation involving 25 women MSME actors in Labuang Village, Namrole District. The findings reveal that women play a dominant and strategic role not only in production activities, particularly in trade and fisheries, but also in controlling key resources such as finances, production tools, and savings. Financial control emerges as a critical factor in ensuring MSME sustainability. Notably, in the specific context of Labuang Village, patriarchal structures commonly reported as barriers to women's access and participation do not fully apply. Instead, women demonstrate a high degree of agency in managing both enterprises and household resources. Nevertheless, persistent challenges remain, including limited access to formal financing, which leads to reliance on informal moneylenders, as well as the dual burden arising from domestic responsibilities. This study underscores that empowering women in local resource-based MSMEs is a crucial strategy for fostering inclusive and sustainable economic development in South Buru Regency. Accordingly, this study recommends the formulation of holistic, women-centered policies that encompass inclusive access to capital, managerial and digital skills training, and the strengthening of social networks to further optimize women's strategic roles in local economic development.

Keywords: *Women, MSMEs, Local Resources, Empowerment, Archipelagic Economy.*

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have long been recognized as a backbone of Indonesia's economy. Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs indicate that MSMEs consistently contribute more than 60% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorb over 96% of the national workforce (Mudian & Prasetyo, 2022). Within this sector, women are playing an increasingly central role. They are no longer positioned merely as supporting labor, but are increasingly emerging as entrepreneurs and primary decision-makers. Women's Economic Empowerment has become a key priority in global development agendas, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth. At the global level, expanding women's participation in economic activities is widely regarded as a driver of inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and improved household welfare (World Bank, 2022).

In archipelagic regions, such as Maluku, MSMEs exhibit distinctive characteristics, notably their strong reliance on local resources. These resources include both natural assets (such as agricultural products, fisheries, and plantations), and cultural assets (such as handicrafts and traditional cuisine), which together constitute the region's primary competitive advantage (Edelia & Aslami, 2022). The utilization of local resources not only generates economic values, but also contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and regional identity. Nevertheless, MSMEs in island regions face multifaceted challenges, including limited infrastructure, restricted market access, and persistent digital divides. Fragmented geography often results in high logistics costs and constrains integration into national supply chains. Within this context, women's roles become particularly significant. Owing to their close engagement with natural resources and local knowledge systems, women frequently act as key agents in the processing and marketing of locally based products (Putri et al., 2023).

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Santi Farinah Tuankotta et al

South Buru Regency in Maluku Province represents a clear example of an archipelagic region with abundant local resources, especially in the fisheries and plantation sectors. As a district capital and a designated Regional Service Center (Pusat Pelayanan Kawasan, PPK), Labuang Village occupies a strategically important position. Evidence from this study indicates that Labuang Village possesses the most comprehensive trading facilities in Namrole District, including a permanent market, minimarkets, and a substantial number of food stalls and retail shops, as reflected in the data presented below.

Table 1. Trade Facilities in Namrole District, South Buru Regency, 2025

Village	Trade Facility				
	Permanent Market	Minimarket	Restaurant	Food Stall	Retail Shop
Wamkana	-	-	-	-	7
Waenalut	-	-	-	-	13
Lektama	-	-	-	-	30
Fatmite	-	-	-	-	18
Elfule	-	-	-	6	77
Leku	-	-	-	-	5
Oki Lama	-	-	-	-	20
Oki Baru	-	-	-	-	15
Labuang	1	1	25	52	
Wali	-	-	-	5	7
Batu Tulis	-	-	-	-	10
Waefusi	-	-	-	-	10
Kamlanglale	-	-	1	5	30
Namrinat	-	-	-	-	12
Waenono	-	-	-	5	60
Tikbary	-	-	-	-	4
Masnana	-	-	-	-	10
Namrole	1	1	1	46	380

Source: Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS) of Namrole District, 2025

In addition, Labuang Village has the largest population in the district, totaling 4,772 residents, which presents both a demographic advantage and a challenge in terms of employment absorption (Statistics Indonesia of Namrole District, 2024). The combination of its status as a PPK, the availability of relatively complete trade facilities, and a sizeable population creates a dynamic ecosystem for MSME growth. Within this ecosystem, women in Labuang Village play an active role, making the village an appropriate case study for examining women's contributions to the development of local resource-based MSMEs. Studies on women's roles in MSMEs have attracted considerable scholarly attention and have been examined from various perspectives. Sari and Pratiwi (2021), for instance, highlighted the persistent challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in urban settings through their analysis of factors influencing women MSME actors' access to formal financial institutions in South Jakarta. Their study shows that despite geographic proximity to financial institutions, many women operating micro-enterprises continue to experience difficulties in accessing formal credit. Key constraints include a lack of collateral, low levels of financial literacy, and negative perceptions among banking institutions regarding women's repayment capacity.

Similarly, Handayani and Setiawati (2022) investigated how women entrepreneurs in the culinary MSME sector in Bandung actively adopted digital platforms, such as GoFood and Shopee, to sustain their businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this technological adoption often intensified their double burden. Time that might otherwise have been allocated to rest or family responsibilities was instead consumed by managing online orders, responding to customer messages, and preparing deliveries late into the night. The study emphasizes that technological support, when not accompanied by changes in the domestic division of labor, may inadvertently increase women's workload. Comparable findings are reported by Prasetyo and Sari (2021), who observed that young women entrepreneurs in creative industries, such as crafts, fashion, and culinary businesses, successfully utilized social media and e-commerce platforms to expand their markets. Nevertheless, they encountered significant

barriers to scaling up their enterprises due to limited access to venture capital and strategic business networks that remain predominantly male-dominated. Wulandari and Sutanto (2020) also provided related insights in their work, revealing that participation in MSME groups yields significant benefits for women. In addition to the access to skills training and collective marketing, women also gain confidence and develop strong social networks. These groups function as safe spaces for discussion and mutual support, ultimately enhancing women's bargaining positions within households and communities. However, the study also notes that leadership roles within such groups are frequently dominated by men, often the husbands of female group leaders, indicating that patriarchal structures continue to exert influence at certain levels. Meanwhile, a mixed-methods study by Fitriani and Darmawan (2023) highlighted the economic resilience of women MSME actors in the informal sector, such as street vendors and home-based service providers. Their resilience is sustained through product diversification strategies, strengthened savings and loan cooperatives, and reliance on patron-client relationships. At the same time, the study reveals vulnerabilities arising from the absence of social security and legal protection.

From a policy perspective, government efforts to address capacity constraints among women-led MSMEs have produced mixed outcomes. Mulyani and Hidayat (2022) reported that while government programs have improved access to capital, they have been less effective in fostering long-term business independence. Major obstacles include top-down policy approaches that fail to accommodate local characteristics and the lack of sustained mentoring. Another relevant study by Santoso and Wahyuni (2020) found that the development of MSMEs based on local wisdom, particularly traditional food products and handicrafts, can increase women's income while simultaneously preserving local culture. Nonetheless, the study also identified a high dependence on the volatile tourism sector and limited product innovation as persistent challenges. Despite the growing body of literature on women and MSMEs, studies that offer locally grounded analyses of gender dynamics in MSMEs within eastern Indonesia's archipelagic regions, such as Maluku, remain relatively scarce. This gap is significant given the region's distinctive socio-cultural and geographical characteristics, which demand context-sensitive analytical approaches. Moreover, limited attention has been paid to women's actual control over resources, including capital, training opportunities, and markets. The control, rather than mere access, often plays a more decisive role in shaping decision-making power and the sustainability of MSMEs. Women's capacity to act strategically, by negotiating, managing, and even dominating certain resource domains within existing cultural frameworks without radically altering patriarchal structures, has also been underexplored.

Addressing these gaps, this study offers a novel perspective by demonstrating that, in the specific context of Labuang Village, women exercise dominant control over key resources, particularly financial assets such as cash flow, savings, and business assets. This finding contrasts with much of the existing literature, which emphasizes women's limited control over economic resources. This present study examines this apparent paradox and its implications for women's economic empowerment. Importantly, women are not positioned merely as passive subjects constrained by structural forces, but as active agents capable of negotiating and utilizing available cultural spaces to develop their enterprises and strengthen their positions within both family and community settings.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) map and analyze women's roles in both productive and reproductive activities, as well as patterns of access to and control over natural, human, and financial resources in local resource-based MSMEs in Labuang Village, South Buru Regency; (2) identify enabling and constraining factors that shape women's roles in MSME development; and (3) formulate strategic models and policy recommendations to optimize women's contributions to the development of local resource-based MSMEs in South Buru Regency. By addressing these gaps and offering empirical novelty, this study is expected to make a meaningful academic and practical contribution to strengthening women's economic empowerment and promoting inclusive and sustainable MSME development in Indonesia's archipelagic regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MSMEs and Their Contributions

MSMEs have long served as a fundamental pillar of Indonesia's economy, making substantial contributions to GDP growth, employment generation, and poverty reduction. Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs (2023) indicated that MSMEs account for more than 60% of national GDP and absorb approximately 97% of Indonesia's total workforce, positioning them as the country's largest employment-generating sector. Beyond their macroeconomic significance, MSMEs play a vital role in fostering economic resilience at the community level, particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions (Nursini, 2020; Sarfiah et al., 2019). Amid global economic shocks, MSMEs have demonstrated considerable resilience due to their flexible cost structures and capacity to adapt swiftly to market changes, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Saad, 2023; Tholib et al., 2023). Moreover,

MSMEs function as important instruments of economic redistribution by narrowing regional disparities through the creation of livelihoods and the stimulation of local economic activities (Shelly et al., 2020). At the global level, MSMEs similarly play a dominant role in driving economic activity. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that MSMEs represent approximately 90% of businesses worldwide and provide more than 50% of global employment, with an even greater contribution in developing countries (OECD, 2021). The flexibility and innovative capacity of MSMEs, particularly in adopting digital technologies, are widely recognized as critical determinants of their competitiveness and long-term sustainability in the digital economy (Adawiyah & Adhitya, 2021; Setyoko, 2023). In Indonesia, however, the substantial potential of MSMEs remains constrained by persistent structural challenges. Limited access to formal financing is consistently identified as a primary barrier across numerous studies (Fajri, 2023; Priyantoro, 2023; Rusliana, 2023). Insufficient access to affordable working capital restricts MSMEs' ability to invest, scale up operations, and pursue innovation, thereby limiting their capacity to contribute optimally to inclusive economic growth (Prakash et al., 2021). Consequently, comprehensive policy support, encompassing financing facilitation, capacity-building initiatives, and improved market access, is essential to strengthening MSMEs' strategic role as engines of equitable and sustainable economic development (Daties, 2023; Hasanah & Arsyadmunir, 2022).

Women's Roles in MSMEs

The role of women within the ecosystem of MSMEs has evolved from that of supplementary economic participants to central actors in enterprise development and household economic resilience. Recent studies indicate that women's participation in entrepreneurship serves not only as a source of additional income, but also as a significant instrument of social and economic empowerment (Dinda, 2023; Putri & Judijanto, 2023). In developing countries such as Indonesia, women frequently leverage local resources and traditional knowledge to establish value-added enterprises while simultaneously managing domestic responsibilities (Nurani et al., 2023). Their contribution to household financial stability is particularly critical in the context of food security, where women's involvement substantially increases the likelihood of achieving household-level food sufficiency (ElKhorazaty & Zaky, 2022). Consequently, women's roles in MSMEs reflects a broader shift from traditionally domestic roles toward more expansive and productive participation in the economy.

Despite these advances, women's entrepreneurial pathways remain shaped by persistent systemic constraints that limit their full potential. Key barriers include restricted access to capital and formal financial services, often exacerbated by gender bias in credit assessment processes and the lack of collateral (Nofriadi et al., 2024; Priyantoro, 2023). Additionally, the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities imposes a double burden that constrains the time and capacity women can devote to business development (Firda et al., 2021). Digital divides, along with limited competencies in modern business management and digital marketing, further hinder women's competitiveness and growth (Adawiyah & Adhitya, 2021; Susano, 2024). Nevertheless, the literature also demonstrates that when women MSME actors are provided with adequate access to training, technology, and business networks, they exhibit high levels of innovation and adaptability. Many are able to effectively utilize digital platforms to expand markets and enhance productivity (Armada, 2024; Karlina, 2023). Accordingly, women's empowerment within MSMEs necessitates a holistic approach that extends beyond financial inclusion to encompass capacity building, institutional support, and the transformation of social norms. Such an approach is essential for fostering a business ecosystem that is both inclusive and responsive to gender equity (Mutaqin, 2024; Nofriadi et al., 2024).

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design. This approach was employed to capture and interpret the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by women MSME actors regarding their roles in developing enterprises based on local resources (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted over a three-month period in Labuang Village, Namrole District, South Buru Regency. The research location was selected on the basis that Namrole District hosts the highest number of MSMEs in the regency, with women constituting the majority of business actors. A total of 25 participants were involved in the study, all of whom were women MSME actors who had been operating their businesses for at least one year. Participants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) female owners or managers of MSMEs, (2) married women, and (3) managing enterprises that utilize local resources. To enhance data validity and reliability, additional informants, including the village head and representatives from relevant government agencies, were interviewed for the purpose of data triangulation.

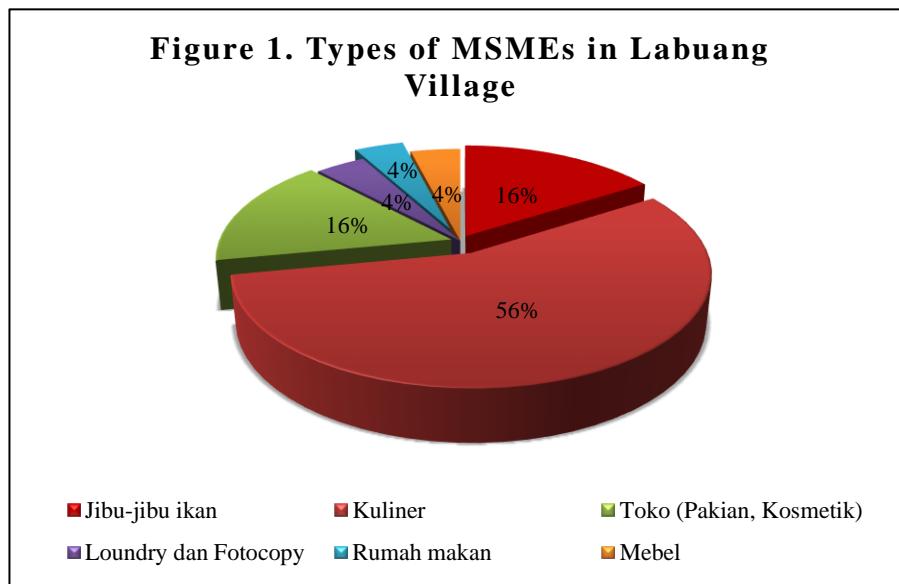
Further, the data was collected through three primary techniques. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, motivations, challenges, and business strategies. Second, direct observation was carried out to examine business activities, production processes, and social interactions within the enterprise context. Third, document analysis was undertaken using secondary data obtained from government reports, policy documents, and village archives. The data was then analyzed following an interactive process consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns and themes within the qualitative data. The principal analytical framework guiding this study was the Harvard Analytical Framework (HAF), which emphasizes three key components. The Activity Profile was used to map gender-based divisions of labor in both productive and reproductive activities. The Access and Control Profile facilitated analysis of gender differences in access to and control over resources, such as land, capital, and labor, as well as the benefits derived from enterprises, including income and assets. Finally, Influencing Factors Analysis was employed to identify internal and external factors shaping gender roles and relationships within the MSME context. Meanwhile, to ensure data credibility, source and methodological triangulation techniques were applied. Findings from interviews were cross-validated through observations and documentary evidence, and further confirmed through consultations with key informants, including village officials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of MSMEs and the Dominance of Women's Roles

The characteristics of MSMEs in Indonesia's archipelagic regions reflect a notable capacity to adapt to various disruptions that may threaten business sustainability. Nevertheless, many enterprises operating in island contexts remain seasonal in nature, responding primarily to fluctuating resource availability and market demand. This complexity highlights the distinctive features of MSMEs in archipelagic regions, where adaptability coexists with structural vulnerability. One defining characteristic of MSMEs in archipelagic regions is their strong dependence on local resources. Enterprises frequently utilize raw materials readily available in their surrounding environment, a strategy that not only supports economic sustainability, but also helps minimize operational costs. Edelia and Aslami (2022) demonstrated that small-scale agricultural enterprises, handicraft producers, and local tourism businesses rely heavily on natural potential and cultural uniqueness. At this level, MSMEs in archipelagic settings can be understood as playing a dual role: preserving local culture and reinforcing regional identity while simultaneously contributing to the broader local economy. Despite their considerable potential, MSMEs in archipelagic regions often face persistent challenges in accessing capital. Surya et al. (2021) reported that only around 20% of MSMEs successfully obtain loans from formal financial institutions. A different but related condition is observed among business actors in Labuang Village, where many entrepreneurs encounter significant barriers to bank financing and consequently rely on informal moneylenders who charge relatively high interest rates.

This reliance on non-formal credit sources poses serious risks to business growth and expansion. In this context, government policies, such as microcredit programs and institutional financial support, become critically important in addressing capital constraints. With appropriate support mechanisms, MSMEs can enhance their production capacity, thereby improving their ability to meet both domestic and international market demand (Rohadin & Yanah, 2019). Beyond their economic contribution, MSMEs in archipelagic regions play a direct role in poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction by generating local employment opportunities. These enterprises provide income sources that enable communities to improve their living standards and overall quality of life (Sunaryono et al., 2024; Nursini, 2020). In Labuang Village, MSME characteristics are strongly shaped by the availability of local resources, particularly in the fisheries and plantation sectors. Among the 25 respondents in this study, 14 enterprises operate in the culinary sector, utilizing fish and tuber-based raw materials such as cassava and sweet potatoes. The remaining 11 enterprises include fish traders (jibu-jibu), retail shops (clothing and cosmetic), restaurants, furniture businesses, and laundry and photocopy services. The diversity of enterprises undertaken by residents of Labuang Village is illustrated as follows:



Source: Field research (2025)

The diversity of MSMEs, as illustrated in Figure 1 above, indirectly reflects their contribution to local employment absorption, although not all enterprises in Labuang Village engage additional labor. In this context, MSME development extends beyond purely economic objectives to encompass broader dimensions of social development and community sustainability. Accordingly, inclusive MSME development initiatives should be prioritized within regional development planning. From this perspective, the characteristics of MSMEs in archipelagic regions demonstrate considerable potential to stimulate both local and national economic growth through a combination of innovation, supportive policy frameworks, and locally embedded comparative advantages. To ensure the long-term sustainability of MSMEs in archipelagic regions with such distinctive characteristics, strong partnerships among government institutions, the private sector, and local communities are essential.

The Division of Women's Roles in MSME Development through Local Resource Availability

The division of women's roles in the development of MSMEs is particularly significant in the context of local resource utilization. In many communities across Indonesia, women play a pivotal role in managing and expanding MSMEs, largely due to their capacity to use local resources in innovative and sustainable ways. Women frequently draw on locally available products and indigenous cultural knowledge to create goods that are competitive in the market. Their involvement in MSMEs not only enhances household income but also strengthens community-level economic resilience (Hasugian & Panggabean, 2020; Putri et al., 2023). In Labuang Village, the gendered division of roles in both MSME development and daily life is reflected in two broad categories of activities: productive and reproductive activities. Productive activities include agriculture, income-generating work, livestock farming, fisheries, and trading. Reproductive activities encompass childcare, food preparation and cooking, house cleaning, water collection, caring for sick family members, supervising children's education, home maintenance, and shopping at local markets. Meanwhile, women's participation in productive activities is predominantly concentrated in trading and the fisheries sector. The types of enterprises owned and managed by women in Labuang Village are diverse, including culinary businesses, retail shops (clothing and cosmetics), restaurants, furniture businesses, as well as laundry and photocopy services. In the fisheries sector, women are primarily engaged as fish *jibu-jibu*.

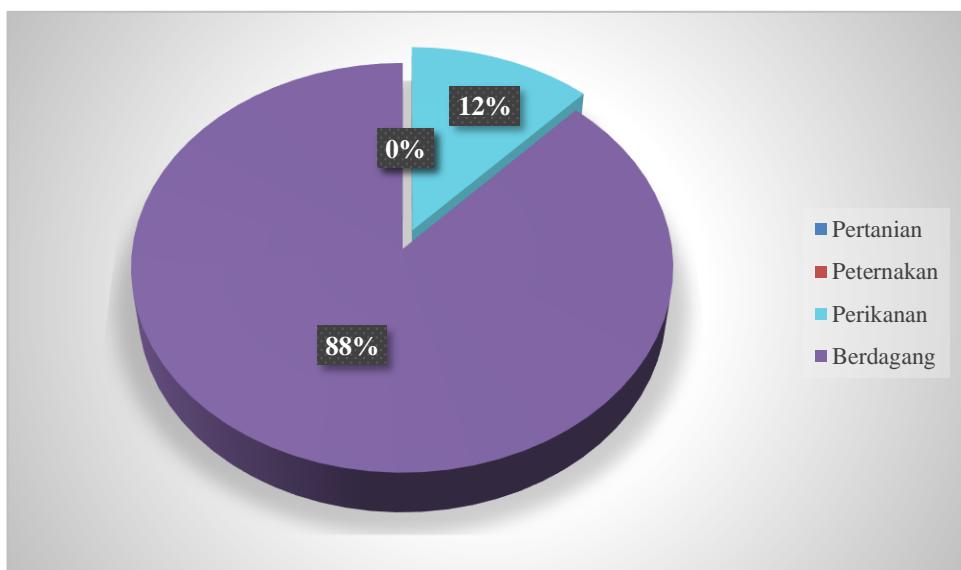
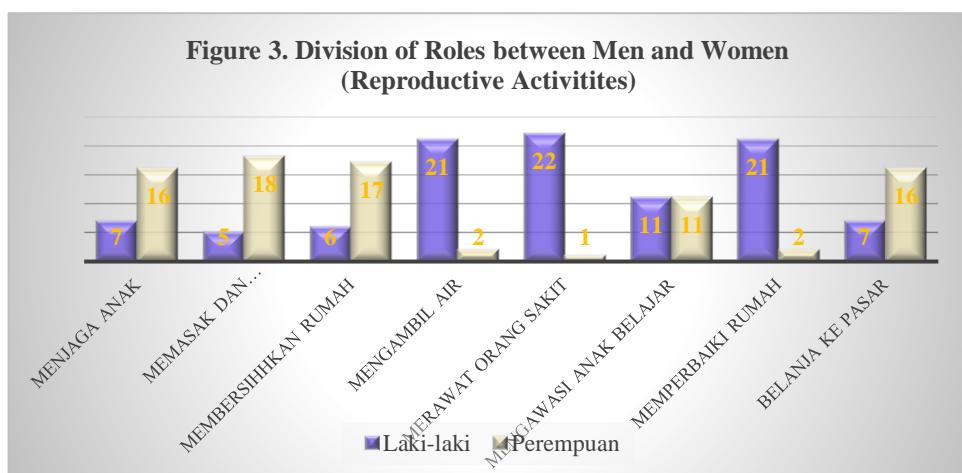


Figure 2. Division of Roles between Men and Women (Productive Activities)

Data presented in Figure 2 indicate that the division of productive roles between men and women across four key economic sectors in Labuang Village is markedly gendered. Women dominate trading activities (88%). A smaller proportion of women (12%) are engaged in fisheries-related enterprises. In contrast, productive activities in the agricultural and livestock sectors are undertaken exclusively by men. These empirical findings demonstrate that rural communities continuously seek to utilize natural resources available in their immediate surroundings as a basis for sustaining livelihoods. They also illustrate that locally owned and distinctive natural assets can be understood as local resources, given their unique characteristics compared to those found in other regions.

Further, the utilization of local resources is largely shaped by experiential knowledge and skills passed down across generations, particularly among women. Local resources, both in terms of raw materials and inherited skills, provide a competitive advantage for women-led MSMEs. Women tend to maintain close proximity to natural resources, such as agricultural products, handicrafts, and marine commodities. Their ability to understand and manage these resources effectively enables them to produce goods that align with market demand while remaining attentive to environmental sustainability (Putri et al., 2023; Nurani et al., 2023). This pattern is consistent with the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which emphasizes leveraging local potential as a foundation for sustainable economic growth (Fridayani et al., 2024). In contrast, the division of roles between men and women in reproductive activities remains relatively traditional. Reproductive tasks encompass childcare, food preparation and cooking, house cleaning, water collection, caring for sick family members, supervising children's education, home maintenance, and shopping at local markets. The distribution of reproductive roles between men and women is illustrated in the following Figure 3:



The division of roles between men and women in reproductive activities, as illustrated in Figure 3 above, indicates that the majority of tasks are undertaken by women. These activities include childcare, food preparation and cooking, house cleaning, and shopping at local markets. For women in Labuang Village, these responsibilities constitute what are commonly understood as domestic household activities. In contrast, other reproductive tasks, such as water collection, caring for sick family members, and home maintenance, are predominantly carried out by men. This division of labor is often explained by perceived physical differences, whereby men are considered to have greater physical strength to perform more labor-intensive tasks. This perspective is reflected in the following statement from an informant:

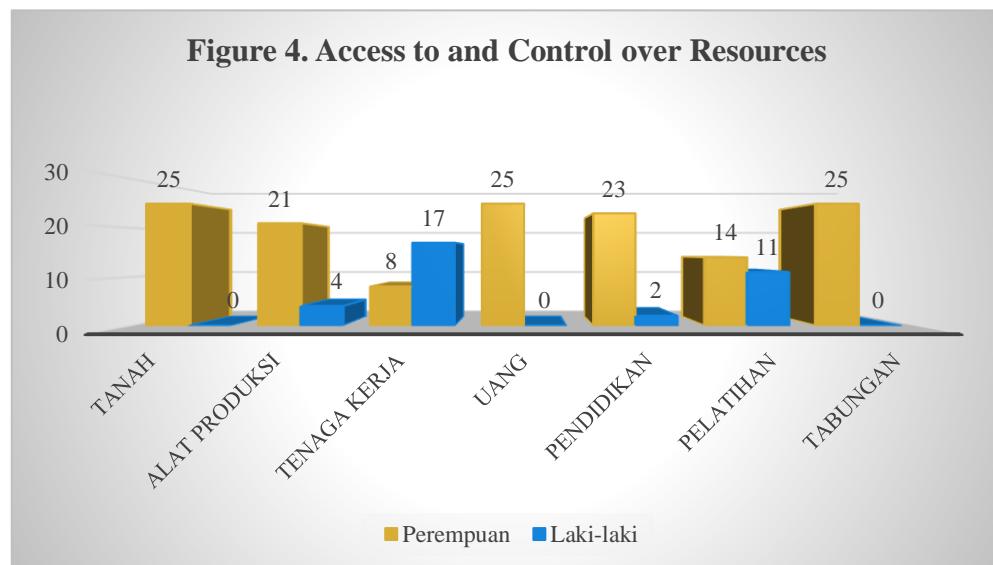
We have never explicitly discussed the division of tasks within the household, but I understand which responsibilities I must carry out. As the head of the household, tasks that require greater physical effort are naturally my responsibility (P, Head of Household, 52 years old).

For these reasons, the division of roles between men and women in MSME development not only contributes to economic strengthening, but also fosters positive social change. When women assume more active economic roles, they serve as role models for future generations and enhance their bargaining position within the household and the wider community. Promoting gender equality in entrepreneurship is therefore essential, as it contributes not only to economic growth but also to broader social development (Angreyani et al., 2023; Putri & Judjanto, 2023).

Access to and Control over the Utilization of Local Resources in MSME Development

Access to and control over local resources in the development of MSMEs often reveal pronounced gender disparities. In many contexts, women face greater challenges than men in accessing the resources necessary to manage and expand their businesses. These disparities are closely linked to prevailing social and cultural norms that shape gender roles within society. Previous studies indicated that women are frequently constrained by domestic responsibilities that limit both their time and access to resources, thereby restricting their ability to fully capitalize on available business opportunities (Firda et al., 2021; Nofriadi et al., 2024).

The empirical findings of this study show that the access to and control over resources encompass land, production tools, labor, cash, education, training, and savings. Meanwhile, the access to and control over financial resources include income derived from outside the business, ownership of business assets, fulfillment of basic household needs, and political influence. Patterns of access and control across these resource categories vary considerably between women and men, reflecting differences in management practices and utilization strategies. This reality is illustrated in Figure 4 presented below:



Source: Field research, 2025

Figure 4 above indicates that access to and control over various types of resources are predominantly exercised by women, including land, production tools, cash, education, training, and savings. Notably, resources directly related to financial management are largely regulated by women. This pattern highlights the significant role women

play in managing local resource-based MSMEs, particularly in terms of access to and control over financial resources. These findings align with a study by Mutaqin et al. (2024), which emphasized that strengthening women's managerial education within MSMEs can enhance local economic empowerment. By establishing effective mechanisms that facilitate access to financial resources, women are able to increase their financial independence and deepen their participation in the local economy. This perspective is further supported by analyses of local resource capacity, which underscore the importance of integrating local resources into MSME business models to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, Nofriadi et al. (2024) highlighted persistent barriers faced by women in accessing capital and training opportunities, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to enable women to fully realize their entrepreneurial potential. As agents of change, women MSME actors play a critical role in driving innovation and implementing more effective marketing strategies. According to Nofriadi et al. (2024), women-led MSMEs frequently demonstrate a strong propensity for innovation by adopting digital technologies and online marketing strategies to expand their market reach.

Factors Influencing Women's Roles in MSME Development

Women's roles in the development of MSMEs constitute a critical dimension of local economic development and community empowerment. Despite their substantial contributions, women's performance and participation in this sector are shaped by a range of interrelated factors, including access to resources, education and training, social support, and the policy environment. One of the most influential factors affecting women's roles in MSMEs is access to financial resources. A research by Nofriadi et al. (2024) demonstrated that women frequently encounter barriers in obtaining loans and start-up capital. These constraints are often rooted in social norms that undermine women's business capabilities, as well as structural economic disadvantages that limit their access to formal financial institutions. As a result, many women entrepreneurs operate with restricted financial resources, which in turn constrains business expansion, innovation, and long-term growth (Yahya et al., 2023). Education and training also play a decisive role in strengthening women's roles in MSMEs. Limited knowledge of business practices, management, and marketing can hinder women's ability to develop their enterprises effectively. This underscores the importance of targeted education and capacity-building programs that enhance women's competencies in business management (Mutaqin et al., 2024). Education not only broadens women's understanding of entrepreneurship, but also equips them with skills in areas such as digital marketing and financial management, which have become increasingly essential in the contemporary business environment (Susano, 2024; Bidin et al., 2024).

Gendered social norms further shape women's experiences in MSME development. Although both men and women face social expectations in business management, women tend to experience greater challenges due to the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities, which limits their available time and energy for entrepreneurial activities (Nofriadi et al., 2024). These imbalances often result in insufficient support for women entrepreneurs. Conversely, inclusive and supportive social environments can significantly reduce these constraints by allowing women greater flexibility and autonomy to focus on business development (Muizu, 2023; Neolaka et al., 2024). Community support and social networks are also essential in enhancing women's roles in MSMEs. Women who participate in business networks or MSME associations generally demonstrate better business performance than those operating independently (Yahya et al., 2023; Neolaka et al., 2024). However, access to such networks remains limited for many women, restricting their opportunities to obtain information, mentorship, and market access. Establishing inclusive platforms and communities that facilitate networking and knowledge sharing is therefore vital to strengthening women's entrepreneurial capacity (Muizu, 2023).

From a policy perspective, government support has a significant influence on the development of women-led MSMEs. Policies that promote access to capital, provide training programs, and offer incentives for women entrepreneurs can help address existing gender disparities. Studies indicate that when governments prioritize women's empowerment in entrepreneurship policies, there is a measurable increase in women's participation in MSMEs and overall entrepreneurial activity (Mahfudz, 2023; Karlina et al., 2023). Information technology and digitalization have emerged as powerful enablers for women entrepreneurs by reducing traditional barriers to market entry. The use of social media and digital platforms for marketing has proven effective in expanding market reach and visibility for women-led MSMEs (Susano, 2024; Bidin et al., 2024). Although access to digital technologies remains unequal, women who have adopted these tools demonstrate notable business growth, highlighting the importance of digital literacy training for the future sustainability of women-owned enterprises. Finally, collaborative models involving multiple stakeholders, such as government institutions, private sector, local communities, and academic institutions, also play a crucial role in strengthening women's capacities within the MSME sector. Such

collaborations enable the design of integrated empowerment programs that provide women with the resources, skills, and institutional support needed to succeed (Najmudin et al., 2023). These findings emphasize that cross-sectoral synergy is essential for accelerating the development and sustainability of women-led MSMEs.

Women's Roles in the Development of Local Resource-Based MSMEs in South Buru Regency

The development of MSMEs through women's participation represents a strategic pathway for stimulating local economic growth and strengthening community empowerment. Women possess substantial entrepreneurial potential; however, their engagement in MSME development is often constrained by structural and social challenges. Consequently, comprehensive and integrated strategies are required to optimize women's contributions, particularly in MSMEs that rely on local resources. Approaches centered on education, skills training, financial access, and social support are widely recognized as key instruments for advancing women's economic empowerment in this sector. One of the central strategies for strengthening women's roles in MSME development is the provision of relevant education and training. Training programs that emphasize managerial skills, marketing strategies, and information technology enhance women's readiness to compete in increasingly dynamic markets (Winarsih et al., 2024; Novilasari et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, empirical evidence from Nofriadi et al. (2024) indicated that women who receive adequate education are better equipped to manage their enterprises and demonstrate higher levels of innovation in both products and services. These findings underscore the importance of expanding capacity-building initiatives, particularly in areas where access to formal education and training remains limited. Further, access to financial resources is another critical determinant of women's participation in MSMEs. Many women entrepreneurs continue to face difficulties in securing capital for business start-up or expansion (Perkasa et al., 2024). In response, financial institutions and cooperatives are encouraged to offer more inclusive and gender-responsive financial products, such as low-interest microcredit accompanied by business mentoring (Indiworo, 2017). In this context, the cooperative models that prioritize women's membership have proven especially effective in strengthening collective capital and maximizing business potential. Researches suggested that cooperatives can serve as an important financial support mechanism, enabling women entrepreneurs to achieve greater business sustainability and success (Mahfudz, 2023).

Furthermore, digitalization has also emerged as a key strategy in supporting women-led MSMEs. Advances in digital technology, particularly in digital marketing and e-commerce, have expanded opportunities for women entrepreneurs to access broader markets. Studies showed that the use of social media and digital platforms allows women to promote their products more efficiently, enhance customer accessibility, and streamline transactions (Armada et al., 2024; Guntoro et al., 2024). Digital tools not only increase market reach, but also reduce entry barriers traditionally faced by women in conventional marketing channels. Besides, the development of strong social networks and community-based support systems is also equally important. Through participation in business groups or associations, women are able to share experiences, knowledge, and resources, thereby fostering innovation and long-term business growth (Muizu, 2023). Collaborative environments contribute to increased self-confidence and provide essential moral support, encouraging women entrepreneurs to take calculated risks and pursue new business opportunities.

In similar vein, support from government and the private sector plays a decisive role in shaping an enabling environment for women-led MSMEs. Policies that prioritize women's economic empowerment, such as funding for education and training programs, tax incentives for women-owned enterprises, and assistance in marketing and branding, are crucial for sustaining MSME growth (Tambunan, 2023; Fakhriyyah et al., 2021). Collaboration among key stakeholders, including government agencies, private institutions, and non-governmental organizations, can generate synergies that strengthen a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem. It is important to note that MSME development strategies cannot be approached through a single-dimensional framework. A holistic perspective is required, one that acknowledges the diverse roles, responsibilities, and expectations placed upon women within the economic sector. By integrating education, access to capital, network support, and comprehensive pro-women policies, the full potential of women in MSME development can be realized, generating broader economic benefits for local communities. In the context of archipelagic regions, such as South Buru Regency, pro-women policies are particularly vital due to the unique geographical and socio-economic challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Women often play a central role in managing MSMEs based on local resources, yet they continue to encounter barriers related to limited access to capital, training, and institutional support. Therefore, the formulation of gender-responsive policies tailored to the specific conditions of island communities is essential. At this level, a key component of such policies is strengthening access to education and training for women in MSMEs. Training programs designed specifically for women must address the contextual challenges of archipelagic regions, including

limited infrastructure and market access. Programs that focus on managerial competence, marketing skills, and the effective use of information technology can significantly enhance women's competitiveness (Novilasari et al., 2024; Mutaqin et al., 2024). Community-based training initiatives, where women actively participate in both the design and implementation of programs, have been shown to produce more effective outcomes than top-down approaches (Aprudi & Murahman, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, several key conclusions can be drawn. Labuang Village functions as a PPK within Namrole District and possesses the most complete trade facilities compared to other villages in the area. This condition has fostered a supportive ecosystem for the growth of MSMEs and holds substantial potential for enhancing community welfare. Further, women in Labuang Village play a highly dominant and strategic role in the development of local resource-based MSMEs, particularly in the trading sector (88%) and fisheries (12%). Their involvement extends beyond productive activities to include a central role in managing access to and control over critical resources, such as financial capital, production tools, education, and savings. These findings reveal an important departure from much of the existing literature: women in Labuang Village exercise greater control than men over resource management and business returns. They are the primary decision-makers in key areas, including cash management, savings, fulfillment of basic household needs, and ownership of business assets.

Despite this strong economic role, gendered divisions of labor within the household remain largely traditional. Women continue to bear the primary responsibility for domestic tasks, such as childcare, food preparation and cooking, and house cleaning, while men are more involved in activities requiring greater physical labor, including agriculture, livestock farming, and home maintenance. Furthermore, although women demonstrate substantial control over business resources, the MSMEs they manage continue to face persistent challenges. These include limited access to formal financial institutions, which often results in reliance on informal moneylenders with high interest rates. In addition, low political engagement and perceptions of insufficient government support represent external constraints that further limit the potential growth and sustainability of women-led MSMEs.

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THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL RESOURCE BASED MSMES IN SOUTH BURU REGENCY

Santi Farinah Tuankotta et al

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