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Gender Role Dynamics in Economic Development: Challenges and Opportunities for Women's Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

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The role of gender in economic development has become a major concern in the context of women's empowerment. This article investigates those dynamics with a focus on the challenges and opportunities faced in women's economic empowerment efforts. Through a comprehensive review of the literature, we explore the role of gender in economic development, explain the various challenges women face in access and control of economic resources, and identify opportunities to increase their empowerment. We also discuss the impact of gender roles in the context of global and regional economic development.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization and technological advancement, gender equality has become a central focus in the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable economic development. Nonetheless, gender disparities in access to and control over economic resources remain a serious challenge, especially for women in developing countries. The dynamics of gender roles in economic development affect not only a country's economic growth, but also the social welfare and progress of society as a whole.

The importance of understanding and addressing gender inequality in economic development demands in-depth and sustained study. Previous studies have identified various factors that influence gender roles in the economy, including gender stereotypes, discrimination in the workforce, and inequalities in ownership and control over economic resources. However, there are still knowledge gaps that need to be filled, especially in relation to the dynamics of gender roles in the context of women's economic empowerment.

In this context, our research aims to explore in greater depth the challenges and opportunities faced by women in their economic empowerment efforts. The main focus of this research is on developing country contexts, where gender gaps in access to employment opportunities, education, as well as constraints in controlling economic resources remain significant issues. By better understanding the dynamics of gender roles in economic development, it is hoped that richer insights will emerge on ways to create an enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable economic growth for women.

Through this research, we hope to make a meaningful contribution in strengthening awareness of the importance of gender equality in economic development, as well as providing a solid basis for the formulation of policies oriented towards women's economic empowerment. As such, the results of this study are expected to provide valuable guidance to stakeholders in their efforts to create a more just and inclusive society for all individuals, regardless of gender.

RESEARCH METHODE

This research methodology uses a qualitative approach with the research location in Summersari Sub-district, Jember, East Java. The research will involve in-depth interviews with purposively selected respondents, including women who are active in various economic activities in the area. In addition, participatory observation will be used to directly understand the social and cultural context in the field (Rosnida, Nita, Hery & Dien, 2023). The data collected will be thematically analyzed to identify challenges and opportunities in women's economic empowerment and the dynamics of gender roles in economic development at the local level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Gender in Economic Development

Gender roles in economic development refer to how men and women participate in a country's economic activities and how these gender roles affect growth, wealth distribution and overall development (Amory, 2019). The importance of understanding gender roles in economic development lies in recognizing that men and women often face different experiences and challenges in the same economic environment.

In many societies, there are gender stereotypes that influence career choices, access to economic opportunities and treatment in the workplace. These stereotypes often restrict women to certain occupations or encourage

them to take on household and childcare responsibilities, hindering their full participation in economic development (Arifin, 2020).

There are also inequalities in access to economic resources such as education, training, land, capital and technology between men and women. For example, in some cultures, women often have limited access to higher education or the skills training needed to enter developing sectors of the economy.

The results show that the gap in access to employment opportunities reflects differences in men's and women's access to and participation in the labor market. In the context of Summersari, Jember, this gap is reflected in several ways. First, women often experience limitations in accessing formal jobs or jobs that provide equal pay to men. This can be due to several factors, including gender stereotypes that view women as less capable in some types of work or more technical jobs. In addition, social norms that require women to focus more on household roles and childcare can also hinder their participation in the labor market.

Disparities in access to employment opportunities can also be reflected in differences in access to education and skills training. Women may have more limited access to higher education or training required for more specific or technically oriented jobs. This may result in them being concentrated in low-skilled jobs that may not pay well.

Based on an interview with Yuli, a housewife who is also involved in a handicraft business in the village, she revealed that one of the biggest challenges she faces is access to employment opportunities. Yuli highlighted constraints in controlling economic resources such as land access and property ownership. She mentioned that despite her desire to grow vegetables on her land, local customary rules tend to prioritize men when it comes to land ownership. This makes her feel limited in developing her business independently and feel less in control of her economic resources.

From these interviews, we see that women like Yuli often face real constraints in accessing and controlling economic resources, which in turn can hinder their ability to participate fully in local economic development.

According to Yati, a farmer and trader in Summersari, Jember, gender roles in economic development reflect the challenges faced by women in accessing and controlling economic resources. Yati highlights that, although many women in the village are active in the agricultural and trading sectors, they often face barriers in gaining access to the resources needed to develop their businesses. One of the main challenges faced by Yati is limited access to markets and distribution, which are often dominated by men. She feels that

social norms that view men as economic leaders and the main decision-makers in the family often prevent women from taking control of their own businesses.

Yati also mentioned that constraints in controlling economic resources such as land are also a significant issue for women in Summersari. Although many women are active in agricultural activities, land ownership is still mostly owned by men, and women often do not have the same property rights. This can hinder their ability to make decisions about land use and develop their farming businesses independently.

From these interviews, the author sees that Yati and other women in Summersari face similar challenges in accessing and controlling economic resources. To address this, it is important for the government and other stakeholders to adopt an inclusive and sustainable approach to supporting women's economic empowerment.

Based on our interview with Ani, a housewife and small entrepreneur in Summersari, Jember, the role of gender in economic development is evident in the challenges faced by women in accessing and controlling economic resources. Ani emphasized that one of the main obstacles she faces is limited access to business capital. As a small entrepreneur engaged in food production, Ani often finds it difficult to obtain loans or financial support from local banks or financial institutions. Factors such as difficult collateral requirements and lack of necessary collateral often make it difficult for her to access the capital needed to purchase raw materials or expand her business.

In addition, Ani also highlighted constraints in controlling economic resources such as access to land and property ownership. She revealed that, despite her desire to expand her farming business, local customary rules tend to prioritize men when it comes to land ownership. This makes her feel limited in developing her business independently and feel less in control of her economic resources.

From these interviews, we can see that Ani, like many other women in Summersari, faces real challenges in accessing and controlling the economic resources needed to grow her business.

In the context of economic development, gender inequality is not only a social justice issue, but it also hinders inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Research shows that increasing women's economic participation can contribute significantly to a country's economic growth. By providing equal opportunities for men and women to participate in the economy, countries can utilize the full potential of their human resources.

Therefore, it is important for governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society to work together to create an

enabling environment for gender equality in economic development. Measures that can be taken include providing equitable access to education and training, promoting equal pay for equal work, and reducing gender stereotypes in society and in the workplace.

Through these concerted efforts, a more inclusive and sustainable society is expected, where men and women have equal opportunities to contribute to economic development and improve their quality of life and that of future generations.

Challenges faced by women and efforts to overcome them

Challenges in women's empowerment involve various factors related to social, economic, and cultural aspects that limit women's ability to access the same resources and opportunities as men (Wayan, Siti & Dyah, 2018). Here are some of the main challenges in women's empowerment:

1. Limited Access to Education

In many countries, women still face barriers in accessing quality education on par with men. Factors such as patriarchal traditions, poverty, and cultural norms that emphasize women's traditional roles in the family often limit women's opportunities for proper education.

2. Economic Inequality

Women generally face difficulties in accessing labor market and economic opportunities on an equal footing with men. They are often concentrated in unskilled or low-paid jobs, and have limited access to entrepreneurial opportunities, business capital and financial support.

3. Violence and Discrimination

Gender violence and discrimination are still serious challenges faced by many women around the world. Gender discrimination is a universal social problem and is particularly prevalent in developing Asian and African countries (Anil, Poonam & Bishnu, 2021). Whether in the form of physical, sexual or psychological violence, or in the form of discrimination in the workplace or community, it hinders women's ability to reach their full potential and participate actively in social and economic life.

4. Limited Access to Reproductive Health

Limited access to quality and safe reproductive health services is often an obstacle for women in taking control of their own bodies and futures. This can limit their opportunities to participate in education, employment, and other economic activities.

5. Culture and Social Norms

Patriarchal and traditional cultural norms often limit women's choices and freedom in various aspects of life, including education, employment and

political participation. A culture that prioritizes women's roles as housewives and child caregivers can also hinder women's career aspirations and economic independence.

Yuli expressed her difficulty, and perhaps that of many other women, in accessing the capital needed to start or grow their businesses. Yuli stated that despite having the necessary skills and interest to manage her business well, she had difficulty securing loans or financial support from local financial institutions.

What this means is that the main obstacle faced by Yuli in realizing her business potential is a lack of access to business capital. Despite having the skills and motivation, without adequate financial support, Yuli found it difficult to take concrete steps to start or expand her business.

Factors contributing to this difficulty include the strict requirements of financial institutions, the lack of collateral that Yuli can offer, as well as gender biases or stereotypes that influence financial institutions' perceptions of women's ability to manage a business and repay loans.

In this context, difficulty in accessing business capital is a significant barrier to women's economic empowerment. Without adequate access to financial resources, women like Yuli may be constrained from realizing their business potential, creating jobs, and contributing to local economic growth. Therefore, it is important to find solutions that can improve women's access to business capital, such as women-friendly loan programs, training on financial management, and advocacy for equal access to financial services.

Yati reflects that in many societies, there is an inherent view that men should be the economic leaders and primary decision-makers in the family. Not only does this view create high expectations on men to be the decision-makers when it comes to family finances and business, but it also devalues women's role and capacity in the economic sphere.

What this means is that existing social norms often result in disparities in the opportunities and support given to women in developing their own businesses. Women may feel weighed down by the expectations placed on men when it comes to managing family finances and businesses, and feel they do not have the authority or trust to take control of their own ventures.

As a result, these social norms can inhibit women's motivation and confidence in running their own businesses, and reduce the support and resources available for them to succeed. Women feel limited in their efforts to develop economic independence and take a more active role in business life.

In this context, it is important to confront these limiting social norms and promote gender equality in terms of access to and control over economic

resources. Through education, advocacy and inclusive cultural change, communities can build an environment that supports women in taking a more proactive and independent role in economic development.

Similar to Yuli, Ani emphasized the biggest challenge in growing her business: limited access to capital. Ani stated that obtaining business capital is very difficult, even in attempts to secure loans or financial support from local financial institutions, which is a significant obstacle for women who want to develop their own businesses.

What this means is that the main difficulty faced by Ani, and probably by many other women, is the difficulty in obtaining the capital necessary to start or grow a business. Despite having the intention and passion to expand her business, Ani found it difficult to secure adequate financial support from local financial institutions.

This highlights a common challenge faced by women in accessing business capital. Constraints such as strict requirements from financial institutions, a lack of collateral that women can offer, and gender bias in the loan application assessment process all make it difficult for women to get the financial support they need.

Sustained efforts from various parties are essential in addressing the challenges of limited access to education faced by women. The government has a key role in providing policies that support equal access to education for women, including adequate budget allocations for education, as well as the establishment of policies that ensure inclusive and relevant access to education for all.

Educational institutions also have a responsibility to ensure that their learning environments support gender equality, both in the curriculum they offer and in teaching and learning practices. They can also provide scholarship programs and financial assistance to help underprivileged women access quality education.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also play a role in providing technical support and assistance to women in overcoming the barriers they face in accessing education. This can include alternative education programs, training on gender equality and advocacy for more inclusive and relevant education policy changes.

International organizations also have an important role to play in providing financial and technical support to developing countries in their efforts to improve access to education for women. They can provide assistance in the development of gender-oriented curricula, training for educators, as well as support in the provision of adequate educational infrastructure.

Overall, collaboration between governments, educational institutions, civil society and international organizations is necessary to create an inclusive and supportive educational environment for women. Only with concerted efforts from all parties can we ensure that all women have equal access to quality and relevant education, so that they can develop their full potential and contribute maximally to societal and economic development.

Opportunities to Increase Women's Economic Empowerment

According to Rosnida Sari (2024) women's empowerment has an important role in development. Opportunities to improve women's economic empowerment involve a number of strategic steps that can be taken by various stakeholders, ranging from the government to civil society organizations and the private sector. Here are some opportunities that can improve women's economic empowerment:

1. Strengthening Market Access and Business Networks

Improving women's access to local, regional, and international markets can be key in expanding the reach of their businesses. This can be done through the establishment of business partnerships, professional networks, and trading platforms that facilitate market access for women. Strengthening skills in marketing and sales can also help women to more effectively market their products and services.

2. Entrepreneurship Development

Supporting women's entrepreneurship by providing training, mentorship and access to venture capital can help them to start and grow their own businesses. Incubation and accelerator programs specifically targeting women can also provide the technical support and resources necessary for them to succeed in the business world.

3. Increased Access to Education and Training

Investments in market-relevant education and training can help improve women's skills and knowledge in various sectors of the economy. This can include training in technical skills, business management, finance, and information technology that can help women to compete in an increasingly globalized job market.

4. Strengthening Access to Business Capital

Facilitating women's access to business capital through microloan programs, unsecured credit, or social venture capital investments can help them to start or expand their businesses. The importance of providing affordable and accessible capital should not be overlooked in efforts to increase women's economic empowerment.

5. Raising Awareness on Gender Rights and Equality

Education and advocacy on women's rights, gender equality, and protection against gender discrimination and violence are also an important part of women's economic empowerment efforts. Raising awareness and understanding of gender issues can help overcome stigma and stereotypes that limit women's potential in various economic fields.

According to Yuli, the main opportunity to improve women's economic empowerment lies in strengthening women's access to markets and distribution, as well as empowering them in business networks and cooperatives. She asserts that by providing women with broader and stronger access to markets and business networks, they will have greater opportunities to grow their businesses, expand their market reach, and increase their overall income. Through strengthening women's access to markets and distribution, and through participation in business networks and cooperatives, women can gain support, resources, and collaboration opportunities that can help them strengthen their enterprises and increase their competitiveness in the marketplace. This emphasizes the importance of focusing on efforts that enable women to take a more active role in economic activity, gain greater control over their own economic lives, and contribute positively to economic growth and sustainable development.

Yati's statement highlighted the importance of expanding women's access to local and regional markets, as well as promoting business partnerships between women and other business actors as key strategies to improve women's economic empowerment. By increasing women's access to wider markets, both locally and regionally, they will have more opportunities to expand their businesses and significantly increase their income. In addition, through business partnerships with other business actors, women can gain support, resources, and collaboration opportunities that can help them to grow and thrive in a competitive market. Thus, efforts to improve women's access to markets and promote business partnerships can be a strategic step in supporting women's economic empowerment and create a sustainable positive impact in improving their welfare and overall economic development.

Ani's narrative emphasizes the importance of easier access to business capital and financial support as a key opportunity to improve women's economic empowerment. She believes that by providing loan programs that are more accessible and without excessive collateral, women will have a greater opportunity to start or expand their own businesses. In other words, Ani sees that the main obstacle in advancing women's economic empowerment lies in limited access to business capital, and by overcoming this obstacle, women can

have more control over their own economic lives and increase their financial independence. As such, focusing on providing women-friendly and accessible loan programs can be an effective strategy in supporting women's economic empowerment and facilitating their business growth.

By effectively and collaboratively utilizing these opportunities between the government, private sector, NGOs and civil society, we can create a more inclusive and enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. This will not only benefit women individually, but will also contribute to more sustainable and inclusive economic development overall.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the dynamics of gender roles in economic development confirms that the complex challenges and opportunities in women's economic empowerment efforts must be understood thoroughly. By identifying and addressing the barriers faced by women, as well as capitalizing on the opportunities that exist, we can strengthen the role of women in more inclusive and sustainable economic development. Women's economic empowerment is not only a matter of social justice, but also a strategic investment in creating a better future for society and the economy as a whole.

Through policies and programs that support women's access to education, entrepreneurship training, access to venture capital, and markets, we can open the door for women to take a more active role in economic activity. In addition, by raising awareness of gender rights and equality, and promoting an inclusive and supportive culture for women, we can create an environment that is more conducive to women's economic empowerment. With strong collaboration between the government, private sector, NGOs and civil society, we can create significant transformation in building a more just, prosperous and sustainable society for all.

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