

## **Women Empowerment in Traditional Culinary MSMEs as Implementation of SDG's in Yogyakarta**

**<sup>1</sup>Indira Annisatu Zahra, <sup>2</sup>Mona Erythrea Nur Islami, <sup>3</sup>Naomi Berliana**

<sup>1</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata AMPTA, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata AMPTA, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata AMPTA, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
([indiraannisatuzahra@gmail.com](mailto:indiraannisatuzahra@gmail.com))

**Abstract.** This study aims to examine the role of women's empowerment in traditional culinary micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as a form of implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 5, namely gender equality, in the Yogyakarta region. Women play an important role in the traditional culinary sector, both as business actors, product innovators, and family economic drivers. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with in-depth interview methods and participatory observation of female MSME actors in the traditional culinary sector. Data analysis techniques are carried out interactively through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The results of the study show that women's involvement in traditional culinary MSMEs contributes significantly to increasing economic independence, social recognition, and strengthening women's roles in household economic decision-making. However, challenges such as access to capital, double workload, and limited digital literacy are still obstacles. Therefore, women's empowerment in this sector needs to be supported through inclusive policies, entrepreneurship training, and strengthening digital-based marketing networks. This study confirms that strengthening traditional culinary MSMEs led by women is a strategic step in realizing SDGs 5 locally in Yogyakarta.

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment; SDG's; SMEs; Traditional Cuisine

### **RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

Women in Yogyakarta play an important role in the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector, especially in the traditional culinary sector which is full of local cultural values (Sudirman, Susilawaty, & Adam, 2020). Their involvement as business actors not only supports the family economy but also helps preserve the culinary culture that is the identity of the region (Septiana & Addiansyah, 2024). However, women MSME actors often face structural obstacles such as limited access to capital, low digital literacy, and double workloads in the domestic and public spheres (Pasciana et al., 2024; Krisnawati, 2016). This shows that although women have become the driving force of the traditional culinary sector, their potential has not been fully optimized due to strong systemic obstacles. Therefore, strategic and sustainable interventions are needed to strengthen the position of women in this sector.

Women's empowerment is an important instrument in overcoming these obstacles and increasing their participation in economic decision-making (Setiawan et al., 2023). Previous studies have shown that a collaborative model between the government, community organizations, and women's communities such as that carried out by Women in Tourism Indonesia (WTID) can encourage women to become more economically independent (Desyanti & Sushanti, 2024). On the other hand, digitalization is also a key factor in empowering women's MSMEs, as seen in the traditional market digitalization initiative in Bantul (Purwani et al., 2023). This argument emphasizes that women's empowerment must include

increasing entrepreneurial capacity and access to technology so that they can survive and thrive amidst changing times and market competition.

In a broader perspective, the role of women in MSMEs cannot be separated from the global development agenda such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goal 5 on gender equality and goal 8 on decent work and economic growth (Tanjung et al., 2025; Lestari et al., 2023). The development of women-based tourism villages and local economies has shown a major contribution to improving welfare and sustainable development (Putri, Arif, & Ramadhani, 2022; Kurniawan, Wulan, & Muslihudin, 2023). In fact, the use of financial technology such as sharia fintech opens up opportunities for financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs (Mawardi, Afandi, & Sueb, 2023). However, most studies still focus on the general empowerment aspect, without specifically examining the contribution of the traditional culinary sector as a vehicle for implementing SDGs. This is the main research gap: the lack of research that combines the perspective of women's empowerment, the traditional culinary MSME sector, and the implementation of SDGs contextually in local areas such as Yogyakarta.

By looking at various good practices from various regions and the approaches used, this study aims to specifically examine how women's empowerment in traditional culinary MSMEs in Yogyakarta can be an implementable strategy in realizing SDGs locally. In line with the findings of (Otoluwa, 2018), local organizations and women's communities play a central role in strengthening the economic base of society based on social and cultural values. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of women's empowerment, traditional culinary preservation, and SDGs achievement as a single unit of analysis based on local data, with a qualitative approach that focuses on the narrative of direct experiences of MSME actors. This study is expected to be a reference in the preparation of more contextual and applicable policies for women's empowerment based on local culture and economy.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurship in Local Context**

Women's empowerment in the MSME sector is a key element in encouraging economic independence and women's participation in local development. (Setiawan et al., 2023) showed that the integration of empowerment programs involving community organizations, such as the PKK and zakat institutions, succeeded in increasing the capacity of women's entrepreneurs in Bantul Regency. This shows the importance of multi-actor collaboration in strengthening the position of women in the informal sector. (Desyanti and Sushanti, 2024) also emphasized the role of non-state actors such as Women in Tourism Indonesia (WTID) in strengthening women's MSMEs through field-based entrepreneurship training and ongoing mentoring.

### **Community-Based Empowerment and Collaborative Governance**

The collaborative governance model is a strategic approach in managing community-based empowerment programs. (Susak and Rahmawati, 2024) explain how collaboration between village governments, communities, and creative economy actors in Purbayan Village is able to develop village potential based on culture and women's empowerment. A similar approach is also shown in the study of (Otoluwa, 2018) which highlights the role of the Aisyiyah women's organization in driving sustainable development based on social values in Gorontalo.

## **Traditional Culinary MSMEs and Their Contribution to SDGs**

The traditional culinary sector has great potential as a means of economic empowerment as well as preserving local culture. (Sudirman et al., 2020) emphasized that the culinary creative industry can be an instrument in achieving the SDGs because it is inclusive and community-based. (Septiana and Addiansyah, 2024) added that MSMEs such as batik and culinary play an important role in supporting the local economy towards the 2045 development megatrend. However, structural challenges such as access to capital and low digital literacy are still major obstacles, as also emphasized by (Pasciana et al., 2024) in a study on women-friendly villages.

## **Women Empowerment in the Perspective of Sustainable Development**

Recent studies link women's empowerment to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goal 5 (gender equality) and goal 8 (decent work and economic growth). (Lestari et al., 2023) showed that empowering women's farmer groups (KWT) in villages can encourage family economic growth while achieving village SDGs. This finding is reinforced by (Kurniawan et al., 2023), who emphasized the importance of developing tourism villages based on women's potential in realizing sustainable rural development. In addition, (Tanjung et al., 2025) emphasized that women's education and literacy are the main drivers in village development based on SDGs.

## **Digitalization and Technological Inclusion as a Strengthening Factor for Women-Led MSMEs**

Digitalization has proven effective in increasing efficiency and marketing reach for women-led MSMEs. *Purwani et al. (2023)* show that training in the use of online applications for market traders in Bantul has improved their competitiveness in the digital marketplace. In the context of financial inclusion, *Mawardi et al. (2023)* argue that Islamic fintech provides more flexible and women-friendly financing access for micro-entrepreneurs, thereby creating broader opportunities for economic participation. Digital literacy and technological adaptation are key aspects in strengthening the resilience of women-led businesses amid the digital transformation era.

## **Local Culture and Strengthening Identity through Traditional Cuisine**

Traditional cuisine is not only an economic instrument, but also a symbol of local identity that supports cultural preservation. (Yuniar et al., 2022) stated that the integration of local culture in the SDGs agenda provides a cultural dimension to sustainable development. (Rifqi et al., 2023) also emphasized that utilizing local potential as a culinary tourism object can improve community welfare while strengthening the appeal of community-based tourism. Thus, the preservation of traditional cuisine by women MSME actors has a dual value: economic and cultural.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe in depth the role of women's empowerment in the traditional culinary MSME sector in Yogyakarta as part of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goal 5 on gender equality. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for studying social phenomena based on the perspective of the actors, emphasizing the understanding of the context, values, and experiences of women who are directly involved in traditional culinary businesses. The research location was carried out in several areas in Yogyakarta that are known to have traditional culinary centers dominated by women actors,

such as Kotagede, Bantul, and Sleman. The research subjects were women traditional culinary MSME actors selected through purposive sampling techniques, namely based on certain criteria such as having run a business for at least two years, acting as a business owner or manager, and being active in an entrepreneurial community or empowerment group. Data collection techniques used include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with MSME actors, entrepreneurship training facilitators, and representatives from institutions or communities that focus on women's empowerment. Observations were made on daily business activities, traditional food production processes, and social interactions between business actors and their surroundings. Documentation was carried out on training materials, activity archives, and publications from communities or supporting institutions. Data analysis was carried out interactively using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, which is the process of sorting and summarizing important data from the field; data presentation, which is the arrangement of data in the form of a narrative or thematic matrix; and drawing conclusions, which is the interpretation of data that is reflective and contextual. Researchers also triangulated sources and techniques to increase the validity and reliability of the data, namely by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. This method allows researchers to explore in depth the experiences of women in managing traditional culinary MSMEs, the challenges they face, and the extent to which their role contributes to achieving the SDGs at the local level. This research is expected to provide practical contributions in strengthening women's empowerment policies and developing local culture-based economies.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Overview of Traditional Culinary MSME Businessmen**

The results of the study show that most of the traditional culinary MSME actors in the Yogyakarta area are women who have run their businesses independently for more than 5 years. They produce typical foods such as *jadah tempe*, *geplak*, *bakpia*, and various types of traditional market snacks. These businesses are generally household-based and managed together with family members. One informant, Mrs. S, the owner of a traditional *jenang* business in Bantul, explained:

*"I started my business from scratch, initially just leaving it at a stall. Now I have five employees, all of whom are mothers from the neighborhood" (Interview, March 10, 2024).*

The results of the study show that women play a central role in driving traditional culinary MSMEs in Yogyakarta, not only as business actors but also as household and community economic agents. Women have proven to be able to create economic value from local culinary cultural heritage, while also opening up new jobs for fellow women in their neighborhood. This finding is in line with the studies of Sudirman et al. (2020) and Septiana & Addiansyah (2024), who stated that the locally based culinary creative industry has great potential to support economic growth and cultural preservation simultaneously. In the context of empowerment, culinary MSMEs become a place for women's actualization—both in economic and social aspects. Economic independence obtained from culinary businesses has increased self-confidence, bargaining power in family decision-making, and participation in public spaces. This strengthens the argument of Lestari et al. (2023) that local business-based women's empowerment is effective in supporting the SDGs, especially in the context of women's economic empowerment at the grassroots level.

## **Forms of Women's Empowerment in Culinary MSMEs**

The empowerment received by female MSMEs generally takes the form of entrepreneurship training, simple financial management, digital marketing training, and strengthening community networks. Several activities are supported by the Cooperatives and MSMEs Service, non-governmental organizations, and local community initiatives.

Mrs. T, an MSME from Sleman who is a member of a women's farmer group (KWT), stated:

*The training from the service is very helpful. I understand how to package products more attractively and start selling via WA and Instagram. (Interview, March 15, 2024)*

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This finding supports that training is an important means of increasing business capacity while building women's independence in managing their businesses. Various forms of training such as business management, digital marketing, product packaging, and simple financial management have become important factors in increasing the capacity of female MSME actors. This finding is supported by Setiawan et al. (2023) and Desyanti & Sushanti (2024) who emphasize the importance of continuous mentoring and cross-sector collaboration to ensure the effectiveness of empowerment programs. Empowerment through this training not only improves technical skills but also changes women's perspectives on their businesses as instruments of social change. Entrepreneurs who initially only ran their businesses as side activities are now starting to have long-term visions and expanding their business networks, both offline and online.

## **Contribution to the Achievement of SDGs (Goals 5 and 8)**

The role of women in culinary MSMEs has been proven to contribute directly to the SDGs, especially goal 5 (gender equality) and goal 8 (decent work and economic growth). Women's economic independence also strengthens their bargaining position in household and community decision-making. One informant, Mrs. L from Kotagede, said:

*I used to be just a housewife. But since this business has been running, I can help the family economy and participate in RT meetings to develop community businesses. (Interview, March 21, 2024)*

This reflects that economic empowerment also has a social impact in the form of increased self-confidence and participation of women in public spaces. Directly, women's activities in traditional culinary MSMEs contribute to the achievement of SDGs goal 5 (gender equality) and goal 8 (economic growth and decent work). Increasing the role of women in the productive sector helps narrow the gender gap in the economic sector, while creating a more inclusive and sustainable local economic structure. These results strengthen the findings of Kurniawan et al. (2023) and Tanjung et al. (2025) that the involvement of women in local development is crucial to achieving the SDGs at both village and city levels. However, to strengthen this impact, a more holistic approach is needed by integrating aspects of training, access to capital, digital literacy, and community strengthening. Digitalization as shown in the study of Purwani et al. (2023) and financial innovations such as sharia fintech (Mawardi et al., 2023) can be a solution to address the classic obstacles faced by female MSME actors.



## Challenges Faced by Female MSMEs

Despite showing positive contributions, women MSMEs still face various challenges. The main obstacles that are often mentioned are access to capital, limited digital literacy, and the dual workload as a housewife and entrepreneur. Mrs. D, a market snack entrepreneur from Kalasan, said:

*If you want to borrow capital from the bank, it is sometimes difficult, especially since the business does not have official legality. I can't sell online either, my child helps me sometimes. (Interview, March 17, 2024)*

This challenge shows that empowerment support is not yet fully distributed and still needs more inclusive interventions, both in terms of technology training, access to financing, and policies to strengthen women's dual roles. The main challenges faced by women MSMEs include limited access to capital, low digital literacy, and the dual burden of domestic and business roles. This shows that structural and cultural barriers are still strong, which need to be addressed through more supportive policies and contextual training. In this case, collaborative governance as explained by Susak & Rahmawati (2024) becomes very relevant, namely through the active involvement of village governments, women's organizations, and local communities in supporting women's MSMEs. Strengthening women's communities such as women's cooperatives, women's farmer groups (KWT), and MSME forums have also proven effective in building networks, sharing information, and conducting collective marketing. This community-based approach shows that empowerment does not only depend on external assistance, but also on social solidarity between women who strengthen each other.

## Local Empowerment Strengthening Strategy

Several actors conveyed the importance of strengthening women's communities, such as women's cooperatives, KWT, and village MSME forums, as a forum for sharing knowledge, joint marketing, and collective business development.

*"We now have a WhatsApp group with fellow culinary entrepreneurs, often exchanging information about training, cheap ingredients, or bazaar events," said Mrs. Y, a member of a women's cooperative in Kasongan. (Interview, March 22, 2024)*

This community-based strategy can be a contextual and sustainable empowerment model, and strengthen women's collective spirit in building the local economy. This finding confirms that women's communities not only act as beneficiaries, but also as the driving force of empowerment itself. This strategy provides space for women to learn together, access resources, and build social solidarity which is important in facing business challenges, especially in terms of limited information and market access. This collective approach also creates a sense of shared ownership and reduces dependence on external parties.

This strategy is in line with the views of Pasciana et al. (2024) who emphasize the importance of social transformation through community-based empowerment, where women's kinship and togetherness values become strengths in building local economic resilience. In addition, the model as explained by Susak & Rahmawati (2024) in managing tourist villages shows that collaborative governance between the community and the government is very effective in supporting women-based

creative economies. Thus, women's empowerment through community strengthening can be a sustainable model and in accordance with local socio-cultural characteristics. This strategy not only increases individual capacity but also strengthens the social and economic structure of the village through solidarity and collaboration between women. This also reflects the principles of the SDGs which emphasize inclusion, justice, and sustainable development from the grassroots.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that women play a strategic role in the traditional culinary MSME sector in Yogyakarta not only as business actors but also as guardians of cultural heritage and as drivers of family and community economies. This role illustrates that women are a key force in sustaining a culturally-based local economy. Various forms of empowerment received by women MSME actors such as entrepreneurship training, digital literacy, financial management, and product packaging have had a positive impact on enhancing their capacity and confidence in managing businesses. These programs are generally provided by local governments, non-governmental organizations, and community-based groups committed to strengthening women's roles in the people's economy. Women's contributions to traditional culinary MSMEs directly support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goal 8 (economic growth and decent work). Through their entrepreneurial activities, women not only create economic opportunities for themselves but also empower those around them. Nevertheless, women entrepreneurs still face significant challenges, including limited access to business capital, low digital literacy, and the burden of double workloads that hinder optimal business development. These challenges indicate the need for more inclusive and responsive policies and empowerment programs that address women's specific needs. Collaborative and community-based approaches have proven effective in supporting women's empowerment particularly through cooperatives, women farmer groups (KWT), and MSME forums that strengthen social solidarity and access to information. Synergy among government, civil society organizations, and communities is key to ensuring the sustainability of women's empowerment programs. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating women's economic empowerment, traditional culinary preservation, and the achievement of the SDGs as a unified strategy for regional development. This approach is relevant for designing inclusive and gender-just policies that are grounded in local potential.

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