

Empowering Women in Development: Insights from the Health, Education, and Employment Sectors in West Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study explores the roles of women in development in West Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, focusing on three key dimensions: health, education, and employment. The research was motivated by ongoing gender disparities observed between women and men in these areas. The novelty of this study lies in its use of the most recent time series data from 2019 to 2023, the application of member-checking for data validation, and its status as the first comprehensive and updated study addressing this topic in the context of West Sulawesi. Employing a descriptive-qualitative approach, the study analyzed five-year data sourced directly from the Central Bureau of Statistics of West Sulawesi Province, supplemented by relevant previous research. Data validation was conducted through member checking and prolonged observation techniques to ensure credibility. The collected data were grouped and analyzed, then presented through statistical charts supported by narrative explanations. The findings reveal that in the health domain—measured through life expectancy—women generally exhibited better health outcomes than men. However, in the realm of education, as reflected in indicators such as expected years of schooling and average years of schooling, women significantly lagged behind their male counterparts. This educational gap correlates with employment outcomes, where female labor force participation remained notably lower than that of men. These findings carry important implications for public awareness and policy formulation. They highlight the critical importance of addressing educational inequality and serve as a foundation for future research, as well as a call to action for government stakeholders to design more inclusive and gender-responsive development policies.

Keywords: Women, Development, Health, Education, Employment, Gender Inequality, West Sulawesi

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Introduction

The study of development economics extends beyond traditional classical economics; it offers a broader perspective on economic issues, particularly those faced by developing countries. As a branch of economics, it examines the challenges of growth and development, focusing on how institutions, policies, and economic conditions influence economic progress, income distribution, and social welfare. According to Afif et al. (2024), the field of development economics evolves in response to changing economic conditions and adapts to contemporary challenges. Given the importance of development in regional advancement, it is equally essential to improve human capital—considered the most critical element in driving sustainable progress. This includes focusing on human development indicators such as health, education, and income. As noted by Rakhaman & Wijayana (2024), individuals with strong human capital are more capable of driving effective change.

The empowerment of women is a vital component of human development, especially in promoting gender equality and creating equal opportunities. It is also a core element of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to ensure that women have equal access and participation in all aspects of life. Biologically different from men, women are equal partners in development. As Santoso (2019) highlights, women, defined in the

Indonesian dictionary as the opposite of men, deserve equal rights and responsibilities. Gender equality is not just a human right—it is a foundation for building a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable society. Abdurrahman & Tusianti (2021) emphasize that women must be involved in strategic decision-making processes if we are to achieve meaningful human development. Among the various sectors, health, education, and employment are critical in shaping women's development outcomes. When these three aspects are well-supported, women's contributions to development will increase significantly.

In terms of health, women serve as pillars and promoters of health awareness. Socially and culturally embedded in communities and closely connected to children and future generations, women play a key role in promoting health education. Suwijik & A'yun (2022) affirm that a woman's health condition directly influences her life outcomes. Good health enables women to participate actively in all aspects of life. On the contrary, poor health undermines their ability to contribute meaningfully to society. Bayumi et al. (2022) assert that women, when given opportunities, can lead and effect change just like men. Therefore, women must receive full support—particularly in health—as a means to build their capacity and maximize their contributions to development.

In the education sector, women's roles are equally influential. Higher levels of education significantly increase an individual's potential to contribute to national development. Education is widely recognized as a powerful tool for overcoming poverty and inequality. Thus, women's access to education is crucial—not only for their own empowerment but also for societal advancement. Bataka (2024), Ibrahimi & Thoma (2024), and Leist et al. (2021) highlight that education helps reduce gender disparities. Furthermore, women's nurturing and resilient nature makes them key actors in both formal and informal education systems.

In terms of employment, women contribute to diverse sectors including economics, politics, and social services. Despite their competence and productivity, many women still face significant workplace challenges, such as discrimination and harassment. Parmenter et al. (2024) report that women continue to be underrepresented in the workforce and often experience racism, sexism, and other systemic barriers. Nevertheless, the workplace presents opportunities for fostering gender equality. By leveraging their expertise and leadership, women can reach higher positions, inspire future generations, and achieve economic independence—while promoting innovation in various fields.

This research is motivated by persistent gender inequality in health, education, and employment—particularly in West Sulawesi. Despite various efforts, women's involvement in strategic roles across these three sectors remains minimal. As a result, West Sulawesi ranks among the bottom four provinces in Indonesia in terms of its Human Development Index (HDI). In the health sector, this is evidenced by its position as the second-highest province in terms of stunting rates in 2022, just behind East Nusa Tenggara. According to the Indonesian Health Survey (2023), West Sulawesi ranks fifth in national stunting prevalence. Danso & Appiah (2023) attribute high stunting rates to parental employment, number of children, birth spacing, and breastfeeding practices. The situation in education is equally alarming. A significant number of women in West Sulawesi lack access to formal education, leading to widespread illiteracy. This is often linked to persistent patriarchal norms that prioritize physical perfection over intellectual development, and result in high rates of gender-based violence, child marriage, trafficking, and divorce.

In the employment sector, women remain underrepresented. Government and private sector leadership roles are predominantly held by men. Since the province's separation from South Sulawesi in 2004, only one woman has served as a regent—in Mamuju, in 2020—highlighting the minimal representation of women in leadership and decision-making. According to the Central Statistics Agency (2023), West Sulawesi ranks fourth lowest in HDI, ahead only of East Nusa Tenggara, West Papua, and Papua. Amory (2019) notes that the province's development index does not align with its gender development index. For true progress to occur, women must be fully involved. Indriastuti

(2023) underscores the need for women's participation in three key areas: health, education, and employment.

The novelty of this study lies in its use of recent time-series data (2019–2023) sourced directly from the Central Bureau of Statistics of West Sulawesi. Data validation was ensured through member checks with relevant government agencies, along with persistent observation techniques to gain deeper insights into the root issues. Furthermore, this is the first known study in West Sulawesi to comprehensively examine the roles of women across these three sectors over the last five years, offering both analysis and solutions. Based on this background, the author is motivated to explore the roles of women in development—recognizing the substantial potential women have to contribute to regional progress under any circumstance. The purpose of this study is to examine the roles of women in development in West Sulawesi Province, particularly in the areas of health, education, and employment. The focus of the research is on the current conditions of women in the province. Therefore, this study is presented under the title: "The Roles of Women in Development in West Sulawesi Province, Indonesia: Health, Education, and Employment Aspects."

Literature

Human Development Index (HDI)

The human development index (HDI) is a tool utilised to measure and assess a country's escalation progress based on three main dimensions: health, education, and decent living standards. According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (2022), the human index is built through three main approaches, namely health as measured by life expectancy, education as measured by expected years of schooling, and decent living as measured by the ability to meet several basic needs. Meanwhile, Moharji & Nurkhasanah (2019) point out that the human development index is a number that measures the achievement of human amelioration based on a number of basic components of quality of life that can affect the level of productivity that a person produces. According to Yaktiningsih (2018), the human development index is influenced by health and longevity, education and income.

Gender Development Index (GDI)

The **Gender Development Index (GDI)** is a metric used to assess disparities in human development between men and women. According to the West Sulawesi Provincial Statistics Agency (2022), the GDI serves as an indicator of gender equality in terms of human development achievements, comparing the Human Development Index (HDI) values between women and men. Giyono and Maemunah (2019) emphasize that while the GDI measures the same key dimensions as the HDI, it specifically highlights the inequality in outcomes between genders. Safitri (2019) defines the Gender Development Index as a representation of progress in life-quality indicators such as education, health, and welfare, while accounting for differences in achievement between men and women. From Safitri's perspective, the GDI functions as a tool to measure gender-based disparities across components of the HDI, namely Life Expectancy (LE), Expected Years of Schooling (EYS), and Average Years of Schooling (AYS).

Women

Women are creatures of God who are biologically diverse from men. According to Santoso (2019), women in the large Indonesian dictionary are the opposite of men. In a woman's body, Allah Subhanahu Wata'alah entrusts the uterus, which is the difference with men. Etymologically, women come from the word empu which means 'master', a person who is smart, powerful, and the biggest. According to Sa'adah & Hannah (2021), one of the amazing things about the Qur'an is that it does not describe women physically. From this explanation, the author sums up that Islam greatly honours women. In addition, in Islam, women are given full rights in organising and determining their own lives.

Development Economics and the Role of Women in Regional Advancement

The integration of women in development—through improved health, education, and employment—is not only a matter of rights but also a strategic necessity. Their inclusion and empowerment drive forward human development and contribute to achieving broader national goals. Addressing the barriers women face in these key areas is fundamental to advancing equitable and sustainable growth. Development economics is a branch of economics that focuses on economic growth challenges in developing and underdeveloped countries. According to Amalia (2022), it addresses complex issues such as poverty, inequality, and underemployment, and seeks to formulate relevant strategies to provide sustainable solutions. In essence, development economics aims to understand and solve the wide range of economic problems faced by developing nations during their growth process.

Economic development itself refers to the government's effort to improve the welfare of its citizens by increasing real per capita income and reducing poverty. Hazan & Aziz (2018) define economic development as a continuous process that results in significant social and economic transformation. Amalia (2022) emphasizes that this process involves consistent increases in per capita income over time, which signals a nation's advancement.

Central to economic development is the planning process, which involves setting clear goals, evaluating alternatives, and allocating available resources efficiently. Kuncoro (2018) asserts that development planning should be carefully coordinated to ensure long-term alignment of government decisions and actions.

One of the critical elements of development is human resources—both men and women. Historically, men have dominated development roles, while women were often placed in supporting positions. However, with technological advancement and social reform, the presence and contributions of women in development have gained recognition. Menambu (2017) contends that a nation that fails to value its women cannot truly progress. Similarly, Bayeh (2016) highlights the importance of empowering women to achieve meaningful and inclusive development.

In terms of health, the condition of public health is a determining factor for the success of human development programs, particularly those involving women. The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of West Sulawesi (2024) states that health is a fundamental human need that reflects the overall quality of life. Zunnuraeni (2023) explains that access to healthcare includes both the right to services and the responsibility of the state to ensure equitable and adequate health protection for its citizens. Life expectancy serves as an important indicator of health outcomes. Maryani & Kristiana (2018) consider it a benchmark for evaluating the success of government efforts in improving the population's welfare. Pratiwi & Mulyawan (2023) also argue that life expectancy is closely linked to a region's level of socioeconomic development.

Access to healthcare, especially for women, remains a key issue. Maulany et al. (2021) define health access as the ability of individuals to obtain appropriate and timely care. Factors such as distance, cost, transportation, societal attitudes, and income can hinder women's ability to access services (Mentari & Susilawati, 2022). Therefore, improving access to health facilities must account for these various socioeconomic and cultural barriers.

On the education front, the role of women is equally significant. Bhuwania et al. (2024) note that female education plays a crucial role in closing the gender gap and has a strong impact on both economic and social development. BPS West Sulawesi (2024) includes education as one of the primary components in calculating the Human Development Index (HDI), using indicators such as Expected Years of Schooling (EYS) and Average Years of Schooling (AYS). Arofah & Rohimah (2019) add that average years of schooling reflect the number of years individuals spend in formal education, which directly affects their ability to participate in national development.

In the labor sector, women's participation also contributes significantly to economic sustainability. Schwartz et al. (2024) argue that female labor force participation has positive impacts not only on individual and family income but also on broader community welfare.

BPS measures this through the labor force participation rate, which reflects the proportion of working-age women actively involved in the workforce. Florina & Abdullah (2023) point out that factors such as economic necessity, educational attainment, and both soft and hard skills influence women's labor participation. Milyan et al. (2021) highlight that many women work to support their families and are influenced by local conditions and norms that allow or encourage female employment.

The growing presence of women in the workforce is also a reflection of their ongoing struggle for equality. Sarina & Ahmad (2021) suggest that increased awareness and emotional resilience have empowered women to resist discrimination and demand equal rights. However, challenges remain, particularly in regions still influenced by patriarchal systems. According to Rambe et al. (2022), patriarchal norms continue to marginalize women by positioning men as the primary decision-makers in both public and private spheres.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach and was conducted between June and August 2024 in West Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The data sources consisted of time series data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of West Sulawesi Province covering the past five years (2019–2023), along with relevant prior research. To ensure data accuracy, the researchers performed data verification through direct observation and documentation. Time series data were collected directly from the West Sulawesi Provincial Statistics Agency. The validity of the data was confirmed using the *member check* technique. According to Sugiyono (2022), member checking involves comparing the data obtained by the researcher with information from the original data providers. In this study, the technique was applied by verifying information directly with key governmental offices, including the health, education, labor, and women's empowerment departments. In addition, the researchers employed the *persistence* technique to reinforce data credibility. As Sugiyono (2022) explains, persistence refers to a consistent and thorough review of literature, research findings, and relevant documents to support the research process. After the data were collected, analysis was conducted by grouping and interpreting the time series data, which were then presented through statistical charts accompanied by descriptive narrative explanations.

Result and Discussion

Women's Role in Health

The Human Development Index (HDI) serves as a key indicator for measuring development progress through three core dimensions: health, education, and employment. The health dimension, in particular, can be assessed by examining life expectancy for both men and women. In the context of West Sulawesi, the community's health status—especially that of women—can be evaluated through life expectancy data, which provides insights into the overall quality of health services and well-being. The following graph illustrates the health conditions of the population in West Sulawesi based on this indicator.

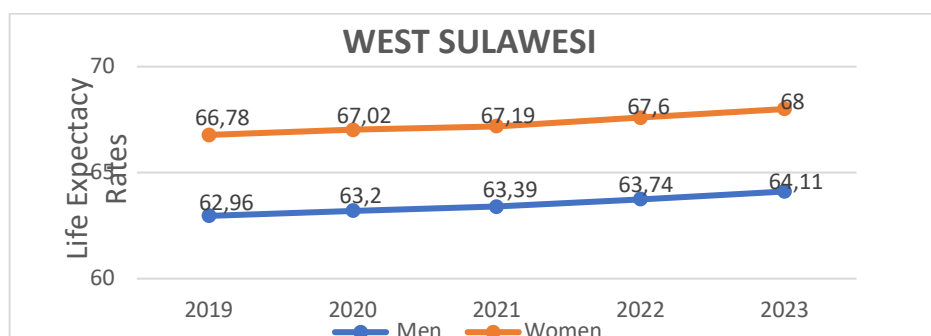


Figure 1 Life Expectancy in West Sulawesi

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Republic of Indonesia (2024)

Figure 1 illustrates the life expectancy of the population in West Sulawesi from 2019 to 2023. The graph shows a consistent upward trend in life expectancy for both men and women over the five-year period. Notably, female life expectancy was consistently higher than that of males. In 2019, the life expectancy for males was 62.97 years, while for females it was 66.78 years—showing a notable difference of 3.82 years. This gender gap in life expectancy persisted throughout the following years.

Although the overall trend for women remained upward, the annual increase was relatively modest. From 2019 to 2020, female life expectancy rose by only 0.24 years, followed by a slight decline of 0.17 years in 2021. It increased again by 0.41 years in 2022 and by another 0.40 years in 2023. Male life expectancy followed a similar but flatter pattern, with annual increases averaging around 0.02 years, except for a significant decline recorded between 2020 and 2021.

The modest increases in life expectancy from year to year reflect the broader public health conditions in the region.

When comparing life expectancy across the six districts of West Sulawesi, Mamasa District had the highest rates, with 6% for men and 7% for women (on a normalized scale of 10%). In contrast, Majene District recorded the lowest life expectancy, with 5% for males and 6% for females. This indicates that public health quality in Mamasa was significantly better than in Majene. Overall, across all six districts, women's life expectancy was consistently higher than men's—a finding that aligns with the research of Maiola et al. (2023), who concluded that female life expectancy generally exceeds that of males.

Several key factors influence the quality of health and life expectancy, including:

1) Lifestyle

Lifestyle plays a major role in determining health outcomes. In West Sulawesi, women generally adopt healthier lifestyles than men. They are more conscious of maintaining a balanced diet, exercising regularly, ensuring proper sleep, and managing stress effectively. Additionally, women tend to avoid smoking, alcohol consumption, and other harmful behaviors. A healthy lifestyle significantly contributes to better individual and community health (Badon et al., 2021; Erlyn, 2022; Izquierdo et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2022). Good lifestyle choices also positively impact the Human Development Index (HDI).

2) Access to Health Services

Improved access to healthcare services also contributes to women's higher life expectancy. In West Sulawesi, healthcare facilities have become more widely available and affordable, increasing the community's ability to receive preventive and curative care. Research indicates that populations with better access to health services tend to have longer life expectancies (Iamtrakul et al., 2023; Bekyieriya et al., 2023; Yilmas, 2023). Women, in particular, benefit from early diagnosis and treatment, which helps maintain their overall health.

3) Geographical Location

Geographic and environmental factors also play a role in health outcomes. Exposure to air pollution, for instance, is linked to respiratory issues like asthma and bronchitis, as well as heart disease. Conversely, cleaner environments promote better public health (Foudjo & Massil, 2024; Hilly et al., 2024). Zulkifli (2024) reported that Mamuju Regency in West Sulawesi was awarded the title of the cleanest air region in Indonesia, highlighting environmental conditions that support better health outcomes in the province.

Women's Role in Education

The educational aspect of human development can be assessed by examining two key indicators: expected years of schooling and average years of schooling. These indicators reflect both the educational opportunities available to the community and the actual years of education completed.

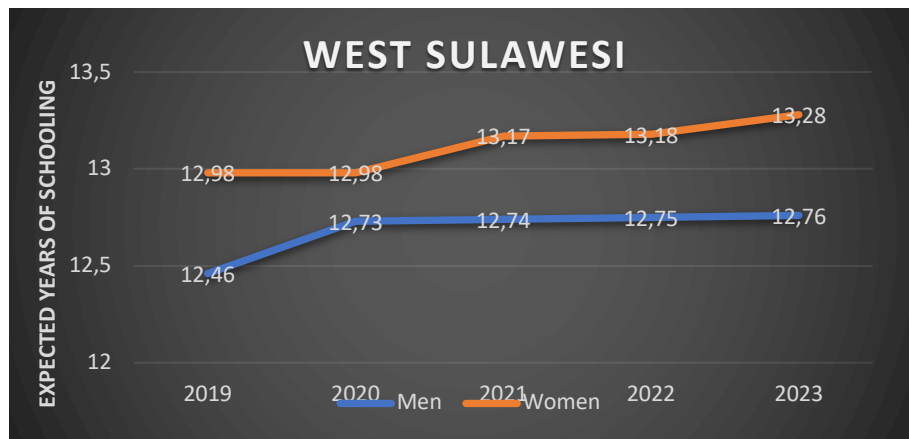


Figure 2 Expected Years of Schooling in West Sulawesi
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, West Sulawesi Province, 2024

The following figures illustrate trends in the expected and average years of schooling in West Sulawesi, which also highlight the educational progress and challenges faced by women in the region. Figure 2 illustrates the expected years of schooling for males and females in West Sulawesi over the past five years. The graph shows a consistent trend in which the expected years of schooling for females were higher than for males. In 2019, the expected years of schooling for males was 12.46 years, while for females it was significantly higher at 12.98 years. In 2020, male school expectancy rose to 12.73 years, an increase of 0.27 years. In contrast, female expectancy remained unchanged at 12.98 years. Between 2020 and 2023, the increase in male school expectancy was minimal—only 0.01 years. Meanwhile, female school expectancy increased by 0.19 years in 2021, followed by a slight rise of 0.01 years in 2022, and a further increase of 0.10 years in 2023. These figures suggest that 7-year-old boys in West Sulawesi had the opportunity to complete their education up to Diploma I level, while 7-year-old girls had the potential to reach Diploma II level, highlighting a notable gap in educational opportunity in favor of females during the observed period.

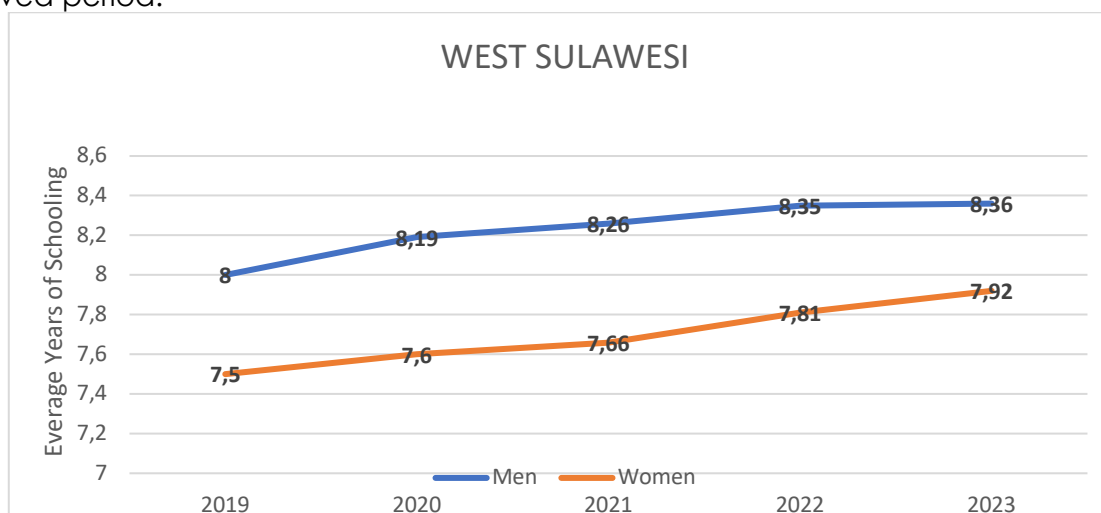


Figure 3 Average Years of Schooling in West Sulawesi
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, West Sulawesi Province

Figure 3 illustrates the average years of schooling attained by both men and women in West Sulawesi from 2019 to 2023. While the overall trend shows a gradual improvement in educational attainment for both genders, a noticeable gap persists between males and females. Over the five-year period, males were able to reach an average of 8.36 years of education—equivalent to about the second or third year of junior high school. In contrast, females only achieved an average of 7.92 years, roughly equivalent to the first or second year of junior high school.

Among the six districts in West Sulawesi, Majene consistently recorded the highest average years of schooling for both men and women, with males averaging 9 years and females 8 years. Despite annual increases in the expected years of schooling, the data highlights a persistent gender disparity in actual educational attainment.

This disparity reveals a significant gap between educational aspirations and reality. While the expected years of schooling for girls were generally higher than those for boys, the actual outcomes show that boys tend to complete more years of education than girls. This contradiction is clearly reflected in Figures 2 and 3, where girls, despite having higher expectations, fall short in real achievement, often failing to complete junior high school.

The root causes of this gender inequality in education include systemic gender bias and cultural norms that undervalue women's education. According to BPS (2024), illiteracy rates in West Sulawesi remain highest among females. Social perceptions that women are less capable or destined solely for domestic roles lead to educational neglect. It is common in some families for daughters' education to be sacrificed in favor of supporting sons to attain higher education (Dessy et al., 2023; Lockheed, 2023).

This lack of educational opportunity also impacts women's roles as parents. Hoff et al. (2024) emphasize that parents' education level significantly affects communication and parenting styles. Lower educational levels often lead to less effective parenting, which in turn affects children's development. Furthermore, economic hardship compounds these challenges, often resulting in school dropout and vulnerability to early marriage.

As of late 2022, UNICEF reported that Indonesia ranked 8th globally and 2nd in ASEAN for the highest number of child marriage cases, with nearly 1.5 million affected children. Alarming, West Sulawesi holds the highest rate of child marriage among all provinces in Indonesia (Arianti, 2022). These figures underscore the urgent need for targeted policies and community interventions to bridge the gender gap in education and improve long-term developmental outcomes.

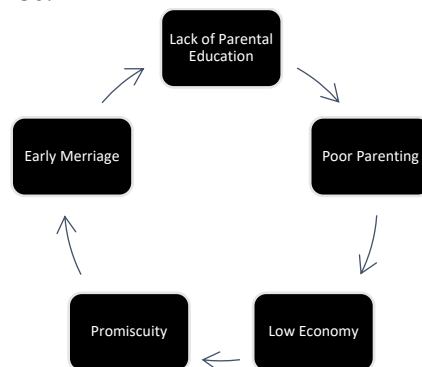


Figure 4 The Cycle of Interconnected Conditions in West Sulawesi Society

Improving the quality of education for women is something that must be carried out by the government because the indicator of the success of burgeoning in a region is seen from the quality of education, so by making it easier for women to access quality education, financial support, and preventing socio-cultural obstacles that can hinder women's participation in education can open up career opportunities and a large contribution of women to society in advancing regional and state amelioration.

Women's Role in Labour

In the domain of employment, the role of women in the progression of West Sulawesi can be measured by the labour force participation rate. The graph of the workforce participation rate is illustrated as follows.

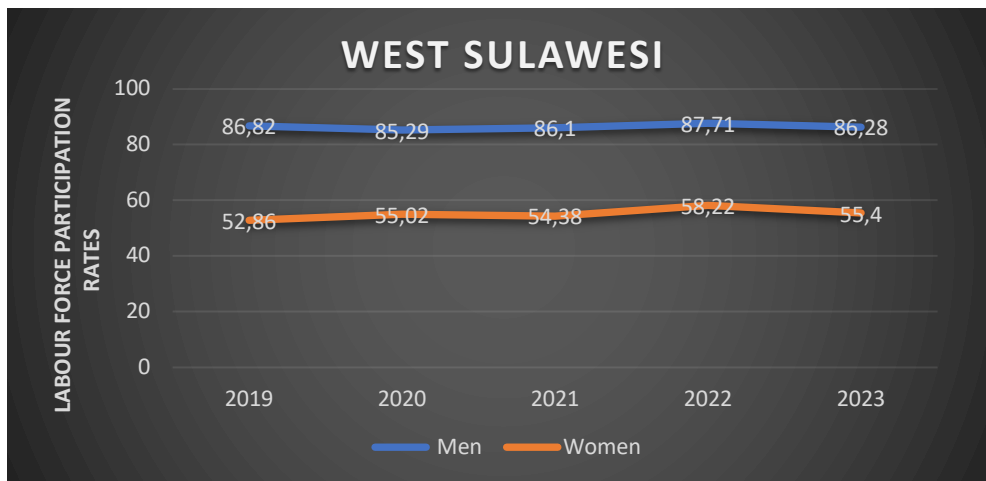


Figure 5 Labor Force Participation Rate in West Sulawesi
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, West Sulawesi Province (2024)

Figure 4 illustrates the labour force participation of men and women in West Sulawesi between 2019 and 2023. The graph reveals a fluctuating trend, with male participation consistently higher than female participation, showing a gap of more than 30 percentage points. In 2019, 52.86% of women were part of the labour force. This number increased by 2.16% in 2020 and continued to rise by 0.64% in 2021. A significant jump occurred in 2022, with a 3.84% increase, recovering from the previous year's decline. However, in 2023, participation dropped sharply by 2.82%. In comparison, the male labour force participation rate stood at 86.82% in 2019, but fell by 1.53% in 2020. Although it rose slightly by 0.81% in 2021 and 1.61% in 2022, it experienced another decline in 2023 by 1.43%.

These patterns reflect that the workforce potential in West Sulawesi remains relatively low, particularly for women who continue to face barriers in accessing strategic positions. In 2023, data from BPS shows that most women were involved as family workers without pay (64.10%) compared to men (35.90%). Conversely, men dominated in freelance employment (87.94%), paid work (77.30%), and roles as employees (62.15%). While women had greater representation as self-employed individuals (63.87%), their presence in formal and well-paid roles remained limited.

Several key factors contribute to this disparity. One significant cause is the level of education. Women in West Sulawesi, on average, only attain 7.92 years of formal education—equivalent to early junior high school—restricting their access to jobs that require higher qualifications. Lower educational attainment correlates with limited knowledge, fewer skills, restricted job opportunities, and diminished career growth.

Cultural and gender-based discrimination also persists. Deeply held societal norms still suggest that married women should prioritize domestic duties over professional careers. This perspective confines women to lower-level managerial positions while men dominate leadership roles, limiting women's influence in decision-making and access to career advancement. These discriminatory norms often hinder women from receiving the respect, recognition, and promotion opportunities they deserve.

Another barrier is limited access to formal employment. Most women with only junior high school diplomas are confined to informal sector jobs due to the educational qualifications required in the formal job market. Moreover, the work environment in many institutions is still unfriendly to working mothers. Facilities such as breastfeeding rooms, childcare centers, and flexible working hours are rarely provided, making it challenging for women to balance career and family responsibilities.

This systemic exclusion extends beyond health, education, and labor. Women also play vital roles in agriculture, trade, animal husbandry, and entrepreneurship—often working informally or part-time to accommodate their domestic responsibilities. In both rural and urban areas, many women, especially those who are married, middle-aged, and from

middle-income households, prefer being housewives or managing small businesses from home rather than pursuing full-time careers.

These constraints illustrate the "glass ceiling" effect, which limits women's potential in public and professional spheres. Women's roles in government and decision-making are often undervalued, yet research suggests their inclusion can combat corruption and improve governance. In sectors like agriculture, animal welfare, politics, and entrepreneurship, the empowerment of women continues to offer significant opportunities for progress—provided systemic barriers are addressed.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the results and discussion regarding the roles of women in development in West Sulawesi Province, Indonesia—using time series data from 2019 to 2023—several key conclusions can be drawn. In the health sector, as measured by life expectancy, women exhibited better health outcomes compared to men. This can be attributed to greater awareness among women regarding healthy lifestyles, as well as relatively easy access to healthcare services. Additionally, the region's clean and cool air quality has supported better public health. In contrast, the education sector revealed significant gender disparities. Between 2019 and 2023, the expected and average years of schooling for women were consistently lower than those for men, reflecting ongoing inequality in access to education. The female illiteracy rate remained high, indicating that many women had limited educational opportunities. Cultural norms continued to discourage girls from pursuing higher education, based on the belief that women would ultimately assume domestic roles. This limited access to education adversely affected parenting quality, contributed to poor economic conditions, and increased vulnerability to social issues such as child marriage—further perpetuating cycles of poverty. In the employment sector, the participation of women in the labour force remained significantly lower than that of men over the five-year period. This disparity is closely tied to the low levels of education among women, persistent gender discrimination embedded in cultural norms, limited access to formal employment opportunities, and work environments that are often unfriendly to working mothers.

Based on these findings, several implications are proposed. In the health domain, efforts should focus on strengthening health programs tailored for women, promoting awareness and education on health, improving access to services, preserving environmental quality, and conducting regular monitoring and evaluation to maintain women's health standards. In the education sector, it is crucial to improve access through educational subsidies and scholarships for girls, especially in remote areas. Non-formal education programs should be offered for women who have not completed formal schooling. Additionally, community outreach is needed to shift societal mindsets about the importance of women's education. Engaging community leaders, enhancing teacher quality through training, and creating targeted job opportunities for women can help reduce educational and economic inequality. In the employment sector, it is important to implement gender equality policies in the workplace. Women should be granted equal opportunities in recruitment, promotions, and treatment at work. Regulations must support the availability of childcare facilities or provide childcare subsidies, along with flexible working policies to help women balance career and family responsibilities. A noted limitation of this study is its focus on only three sectors—health, education, and employment. Future researchers are encouraged to explore women's roles in other dimensions of development to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their contributions and challenges in regional progress.

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