

Inclusive Economic Empowerment through Halal Product Certification and the Development of a Culinary Center for Women-Led MSMEs in Denai Sarang Burung Village

Arlina Nurbaity Lubis¹, Prihatin Lumbanraja², Ritha F Dalimunthe³,
Pujiati⁴, Ramadani⁵

^{1,2,3}Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

⁴Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

⁵Faculty of Economics, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

^{1,3,4,5}Gender and Child Studies Center, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Article Information

Article History

Received, September 15, 2025

Revised, October 2, 2025

Accepted, October 8, 2025

Published, October 10, 2025

Corresponding Author:

Prihatin Lumbanraja, Faculty
of Economics and Business,
Universitas Sumatera Utara,
Medan, Indonesia.

Email: prihatin@usu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This community engagement program aims to enhance the village's economic self-reliance and social resilience through a participatory and collaborative approach involving women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), youth, children, and the village government as key partners. The implementation stages began with village potential mapping through focus group discussions, followed by business legalization assistance including the issuance of Business Identification Numbers (NIB) and halal product certification along with training in business management, product innovation, and digital marketing. The results demonstrate a significant increase in local capacity and competitiveness: several women-owned MSMEs successfully obtained NIB and halal certificates, the process of establishing a culinary and souvenir center (Pujasera) as a hub for local product promotion was successfully initiated, and a digital marketing network was developed to expand market access, while a more child-friendly and gender-equitable village environment was fostered. These achievements confirm that a participatory and collaborative model can effectively create an inclusive, competitive, and sustainable village ecosystem, while also making a tangible contribution to the advancement of knowledge.

Keywords: Inclusive economy, Women entrepreneurs, Halal certification, Digital marketing, Rural empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Denai Sarang Burung Village in Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, has great human and economic resource potential to develop into an independent and inclusive village. With a population of 1,980, the majority are of productive age (15–64 years) at 1,394 (Deli Serdang Regency BPS, 2023). This condition is an important asset for community-based economic development. The village's economic activities are dominated by the agriculture and plantation sectors, accompanied by the emergence of home industries such as food processing and handicrafts. During three years of continuous assistance, this village has shown significant progress through the development of basic infrastructure and community capacity building, including better road access, sanitation awareness, and entrepreneurial skills training (Dalimunthe, 2024).

The entrepreneurial potential of women in this village is very prominent. Various home industry products managed by women, such as chocolate bananas, banana cakes, lemak rice, chips, fish flour, organic fertilizer, and bouquet crafts, are proof of creativity and promising economic opportunities. Studies by UN Women (2017) and Kabeer (2012) confirm that women's empowerment plays an important role in creating a more inclusive and equitable economic system, while also improving family welfare. However, women MSME actors in Denai Sarang Burung Village still face obstacles such as low education levels, limited access to technology, and a lack of support for sustainable economic empowerment programs (Bappenas, 2020). These obstacles reduce the competitiveness of local products, especially when it comes to meeting broader market standards.

Women's empowerment emphasizes that increasing women's capacity in the economic sector has a significant impact on family welfare and local economic growth. According to Kabeer (2012), women's empowerment is not only about increasing income, but also includes access to resources, participation in decision-making, and strengthening bargaining power in households and communities. UN Women (2017) emphasizes that when women are given equal opportunities to access education, training, and business capital, poverty rates can be significantly reduced. In Indonesia, a study by Hermawan and Suryani (2021) shows that women MSME entrepreneurs who received training in management and digital marketing were able to increase their income by up to 30% compared to entrepreneurs who did not participate in the training. This indicates that interventions through training and mentoring can be a catalyst for women's economic independence in rural areas.

One strategic opportunity that can strengthen the village economy is the development of a One-Stop Snack Center (Pujasera) as a center for the promotion and sale of local products. The use of strategic village land to build a Pujasera with attractive packaging and a distinctive village identity is expected to create a new economic hub that supports the sustainability of women's businesses. On the other hand, halal product certification is an urgent need so that MSME products can penetrate a wider market and meet national and international food safety standards. Halal certification has been proven to increase consumer confidence and open up greater market access, especially in Muslim-majority countries (Hasanah & Rahmawati, 2021).

The aspects of business legalization and the development of the All-in-One Snack Center (Pujasera) are also key factors in strengthening the sustainability of micro businesses. Business legalization through the issuance of a Business Identification Number (NIB) and halal certification provides legal certainty, increases consumer confidence, and opens access to financing programs and wider markets (Hasanah & Rahmawati, 2021). According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2022), MSMEs that have business legality have a 40% greater chance of obtaining access to formal capital compared to businesses that do not have a license. Meanwhile, Pujasera as a center for snacks and souvenirs functions as an economic center that encourages the promotion of local products, strengthens village identity, and creates new jobs (Sari & Prasetyo, 2020). The Pujasera concept has proven effective in various regions as a community-based empowerment model, where business actors can collectively market products with the support of representative facilities and good management. Thus, the combination of women's empowerment, business legalization, and Pujasera development becomes an integral strategy for creating an inclusive, competitive, and sustainable village economic ecosystem.

This community service activity is designed to provide concrete solutions through an integrated approach that covers economic, social, educational, and digitalization aspects. This program not only aims to increase the community's capacity in entrepreneurship and local-based business management but also to create an inclusive and sustainable economic ecosystem, with a special focus on women's empowerment.

Through this activity, it is hoped that a representative village souvenir center will be formed as a marketing platform for MSME products. Based on these conditions, strengthening the inclusive economy through halal certification assistance, business management and digital marketing

training, and the development of Pujasera are strategic steps to increase the economic independence of Denai Sarang Burung Village.

This program is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) (Bappenas, 2020). The synergy between academics, village governments, and the community is expected to produce a sustainable model for women's empowerment, increase the competitiveness of MSMEs, and strengthen the inclusive economic ecosystem at the local level.

Through collaboration with the village head and his staff, who have provided tangible support in the form of infrastructure development, moral support, and strengthening of local policies, this activity is expected to promote comprehensive gender-based inclusive economic strengthening. The main focus is on empowering women to manage and develop local businesses in a sustainable manner, as well as creating a friendly and safe village environment for children through protection and character-building efforts. In addition, this activity is also expected to foster entrepreneurial literacy awareness, increase women's access to markets and business networks, and strengthen spiritual and social values among children and adolescents as part of empowering and inclusive community development. Active support from the village government is an important foundation in building a sustainable empowerment ecosystem rooted in the strength of the local community. This activity also contributes directly to the achievement of the Main Performance Indicators (IKU) for Higher Education Institutions set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, namely: IKU 2: Students Gain Experience Outside Campus, with student involvement in research, field observations, and community assistance in Denai Sarang Burung Village, providing real-world experience in village community development; KPI 3: Lecturers Engage in Off-Campus Activities, through the involvement of lecturers in the development of community empowerment programs and the application of applied research to solve real problems in the field; and KPI 5: Lecturers' Work Results are Used by the Community, where lecturers contribute through program innovations, training modules, and mentoring strategies that are directly utilized by the village community.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is the process of increasing women's capacity, skills, and access to economic, social, and political resources so that they can participate fully in decision-making and have control over their lives.

According to Kabeer (1999), women's empowerment encompasses three main dimensions, namely resources, agency (the ability to make choices and decisions), and achievements (the results of the choices made). In the context of entrepreneurship, women's empowerment not only provides business opportunities but also creates an ecosystem that supports the improvement of knowledge, skills, market access, and sustainable social support. This is in line with the opinion of UN Women (2020), which emphasizes that women's economic empowerment has an impact on improving family welfare, poverty alleviation, and inclusive economic growth. In Indonesia, women's empowerment in the MSME sector is a government priority through entrepreneurship training programs, marketing digitalization, and business assistance. A study by Sari and Susilo (2021) shows that women who receive entrepreneurship training and access to technology have higher business success rates and are able to create jobs for their communities. Therefore, women's empowerment in entrepreneurship is a key strategy for improving economic independence and family resilience, especially in the digital economy era.

b. Gender-Based Inclusive Economy

A gender-based inclusive economy is a system that provides equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender, to participate in economic activities, obtain fair benefits, and have control over development outcomes. The OECD (2018) emphasizes that gender inclusion in the

economy contributes to increased productivity, reduced poverty, and strengthened social stability. In the rural context, this approach includes reducing the wage gap between men and women, increasing women's participation in the productive sector, and providing equal access to productive resources such as land, capital, training, and markets. The World Bank (2020) found that when women have equal access to productive resources, agricultural yields can increase by 20–30%, which directly strengthens food security and the local economy. In addition, a gender-based inclusive economy is also in line with the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) point 5 on Gender Equality and point 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, thereby supporting more equitable and sustainable growth.

c. Digitalization

Digitalization is the process of transforming business activities from conventional systems to digital technology-based systems by utilizing the internet, software, and online platforms (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). In the context of women's entrepreneurship, digitization enables business actors to expand their market reach, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen marketing strategies through social media, marketplaces, and business support applications (Giones & Brem, 2017). The use of digital technology, such as e-commerce, digital payment systems, and customer data analysis, not only increases competitiveness but also helps entrepreneurs adapt to changes in consumer behavior that are increasingly digitized (Bouwman et al., 2019). At the scale of women's MSMEs, digitization plays an important role in reducing market entry barriers, accelerating the innovation process, and opening up opportunities for cross-regional and even cross-border collaboration (UNCTAD, 2020). In Indonesia, the government, through the National Digital Literacy Movement program and the facilitation of digital product certification, is working to strengthen the capabilities of women's MSMEs so that they can compete in the digital economy era (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2023). Thus, digitization is not only an operational tool but also a business transformation strategy to achieve business sustainability in an era of technological disruption.

d. Business Legalization

Business legalization is a formal process that provides legal recognition to business actors through the issuance of official licenses such as a Business Identification Number (NIB), halal certificates, and distribution permits, which not only comply with regulations but also provide legal certainty, protect against sanctions, and facilitate access to support from the government and financial institutions (Sari & Hartono, 2022). Research by Nugroho et al. (2021) shows that legalization increases consumer confidence and product credibility, especially for MSMEs in the food and creative sectors. License ownership also has a positive impact on sustainability and competitiveness, enabling business actors to obtain formal financing, partnerships, and export opportunities (Rahmawati & Pratama, 2023). The government supports this through a risk-based licensing system (OSS-RBA) that facilitates affordable online registration (Ministry of Investment/BKPM, 2023), making legalization the key to creating an inclusive business ecosystem and sustainable entrepreneurial growth in various regions.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This community service activity employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, combining processes of problem identification, action, and reflection in a continuous cycle. PAR was chosen because it not only positions the community as beneficiaries, but also as co-researchers who are actively involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation. Compared to conventional qualitative methods, PAR is considered the most appropriate for empowerment programs since it ensures contextual solutions, strengthens community ownership, and enhances sustainability of outcomes. This method is aligned with the objectives of inclusive economic development, where

women-led MSMEs and local governments are both subjects and implementers of the change process.

The research was conducted in Denai Sarang Burung Village, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, with participants consisting of 30 women entrepreneurs, 20 youths, and 10 village officials. Data were collected through focus group discussions (FGDs), workshops, participatory observation, and pre/post surveys. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, while quantitative survey data were analyzed descriptively to measure improvements in entrepreneurial knowledge, digital skills, and market access.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The implementation of this community service program successfully applied a participatory and collaborative approach, which encouraged the active involvement of the community, especially women, and the village government as key partners. During the program, the community was not only beneficiaries, but also played a role as planners, implementers, and developers of activities. The activities carried out included entrepreneurship training and marketing digitization for women entrepreneurs, the establishment of a village souvenir center as a means of promoting local MSME products, and the processing of business legalization such as NIB and Halal Certification. As a result, a strong synergy was created between the community and the village government, a digital-based marketing network was formed, women's participation in economic activities increased, and a village environment that supports gender equality was created. The following are the forms of community service activities that have been carried out :

a. Focus Group Discussion

Community service activities in Denai Sarang Burung Village began with observation and mapping of potential through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on May 26, 2025, which was attended by 35 participants, including women MSME entrepreneurs, village officials, and community representatives. The results of the FGD and survey showed full support (100%) for the plan to establish a Snack and Souvenir Center (Pujasera) as a center for promoting local products as well as a Muslim-friendly culinary tourist attraction. All participants considered that the existence of the pujasera would expand product marketing, increase tourist attraction, and open up new job opportunities. Similar enthusiasm was also seen in the digital marketing training plan, where 100% of participants expressed interest in learning about promotion through social media and online platforms as a strategy to expand the market reach of MSME products. Facilitating business legalization is an important part of this program to increase the competitiveness of local products. Community support for the process of issuing Business Identification Numbers (NIB) and halal certification is very high, as it is considered to provide legal certainty and increase consumer confidence.

Hasil Survei Program Desa Binaan USU 2025 Desa Denai Sarang Burung

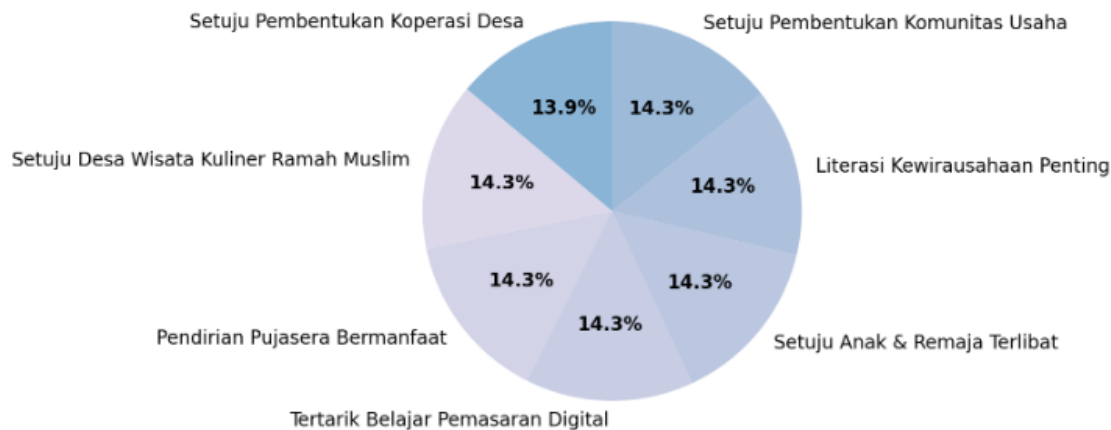


Figure 1. Graph of the USU 2025 Mentored Village Program Survey

The survey findings visualized in Figure 3.1 reinforce these results. A total of 14.3% of respondents considered entrepreneurial literacy to be very important, 14.3% supported the formation of business communities, and 14.3% agreed with the involvement of children and adolescents in the management of food courts. The same level of support (14.3%) was also given to the establishment of food courts and digital marketing training, while another 14.3% supported the development of Muslim-friendly culinary tourism villages. Meanwhile, 13.9% of respondents expressed their approval of the establishment of village cooperatives as a pillar of economic strengthening. This data confirms that the community fully supports the three main pillars of digital marketing training, the establishment of food courts, and business legalization, which are the focus of the community service program. The relatively balanced high percentage of support shows the collective awareness and commitment of the community in creating an inclusive, independent, and sustainable village economic ecosystem.

b. Business Legalization Management

Community service activities in Denai Sarang Burung Village on Saturday, June 7, 2025, focused on digital training, the establishment of a food court (Pujasera), and business legalization management to increase the competitiveness of women's MSMEs. The Village Assistance Team led by Prof. Dr. Prihatin Lumbanraja, SE., M.Si, together with team members, provided intensive assistance to nine women MSME entrepreneurs in obtaining their Business Identification Number (NIB) and halal certification. This activity aimed to expand market access, strengthen consumer confidence, and encourage MSMEs to move up the ladder. The mentoring process involved Mrs. Maria Monarita Damanik, S.Keb., M.Si, as Chair of YKM NU North Sumatra and halal supervisor, as well as representatives from the Halal Supervision and Mentoring Center (P3H) of Asahan University, who provided technical guidance ranging from raw material verification, administrative document preparation, to file uploading to the SiHalal system. Two students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at USU also provided technical assistance and documented the activities as part of their field studies.

In addition to business legalization, this activity was integrated with the Pujasera establishment program as a creative economic center that serves as a means of promoting and selling MSME products on an ongoing basis. Pujasera is expected to expand marketing opportunities and optimize local potential. The community's enthusiasm was very high, as seen from the active participation of MSME actors who felt helped in increasing their business capacity and market access. Through this activity, nine MSMEs successfully obtained NIB and halal

certificates, which is a strategic step to strengthen family economic resilience and build an inclusive and competitive business ecosystem in Denai Sarang Burung Village.

c. Business Management and Product Innovation Training

This training activity was designed to equip participants with basic skills in managing businesses effectively and sustainably. The material began with an introduction to simple but crucial business management principles, such as neat financial recording and management so that business cash flow can be monitored properly. Participants are encouraged to understand the importance of separating personal and business finances, creating budget plans, and monitoring expenses and income on a regular basis. These steps are an important foundation for ensuring that businesses remain financially healthy and have opportunities for growth.

Next, participants are given material on appropriate and attractive product packaging techniques, which not only protect the product but also increase its appeal to consumers. This session also explained how the selection of packaging materials, visual design, and clear product information can add value and a professional image to the business. In addition, participants were encouraged to understand the strategy of using brands and logos as part of product branding. Strong branding will help products be more memorable, build consumer trust, and create an identity that distinguishes products from competitors.

At the end of the activity, participants were motivated to continue maintaining the quality of their products and developing innovation in a sustainable manner. The speaker emphasized that innovation is the key to maintaining business relevance amid changing market trends and consumer tastes. With a combination of good business management, attractive packaging, strong branding, and a high spirit of innovation, it is hoped that business actors can expand their market reach, increase competitiveness, and encourage businesses to move up a class. This training not only provided practical knowledge but also built a strong entrepreneurial mindset that is adaptive to change.

d. Capacity Building for Digitalization and Marketing of MSME Products

The capacity building activity for digitalization and marketing of MSME products in Denai Sarang Burung Village was carried out to equip business actors with practical skills in utilizing digital technology as a means of promotion and sales. The training emphasizes the importance of business transformation towards going digital as a strategy to expand market reach, increase competitiveness, and maintain existence amid competition. Participants gain an understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and risks if businesses do not keep up with technological developments, so that they are encouraged to immediately apply digital innovations in their business processes.

The training material covered marketplace optimization, ranging from platform selection, utilization of promotional programs, original content strategies, product photography techniques, copywriting for product descriptions, to managing ratings and reviews to maintain store reputation. Participants also practiced utilizing social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business to strengthen brand awareness, build interactions with customers, and promote products creatively. The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' understanding of digital marketing strategies, and several MSME players were immediately able to create marketplace accounts and prepare promotional content, marking the beginning of a digital transformation that supports sustainable business development and increased family income.

e. Establishment of PUJASERA

Based on the results of the FGD and field observations in Denai Sarang Burung Village, it was agreed to establish a Pujasera as a culinary center that can accommodate local businesses while supporting the development of a Muslim-friendly tourist village. This agreement was formalized through an integrity pact signed by the Village Head, village officials, community leaders, and

community representatives, demonstrating a shared commitment to the management and sustainability of Pujasera. The location for the construction has been determined to be in Hamlet IV, on land legally owned by the KUD, so that its use will not cause any conflicts. This demonstrates careful planning based on community participation to create safe and legal public facilities.

The next steps include submitting a proposal for assistance to Bank Indonesia, the Financial Services Authority (OJK), and related industries for the provision of gazebos or stands for local entrepreneurs, as well as designing the layout of the location, which includes visitor circulation, parking areas, and green open spaces. Pujasera is designed as a collaborative facility: the community is involved in its construction and management, the village government acts as a facilitator, USU provides assistance through management training and digital marketing strategies, while the business world is expected to provide partnership support. Current trends highlight the growing importance of inclusive local economies, business digitalization, and the empowerment of female entrepreneurs; Pujasera is expected to become a hub for creative economy and a Muslim-friendly tourist destination that promotes the well-being of the community in Denai Sarang Burung Village.

5. CONCLUSION

This program demonstrates that inclusive economic empowerment through halal certification, business training, digitalization, and the establishment of Pujasera can strengthen women-led MSMEs and create a sustainable rural ecosystem. Beyond summarizing the results, several implications can be drawn:

1. Practical Implications: The model provides a replicable framework for other villages seeking to empower MSMEs through collaborative action between communities, local government, and academia.
2. Academic Implications: The study contributes to the literature on women's economic empowerment and rural development, highlighting PAR as an effective methodological approach for sustainable community-based programs.
3. Policy Implications: Findings suggest that government agencies should integrate halal certification facilitation, digital literacy programs, and collective marketing centers into rural development policies to improve competitiveness of local MSMEs.

By combining business legalization, capacity building, and inclusive infrastructure, Denai Sarang Burung Village has laid the foundation for a more competitive and resilient local economy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to LPPM Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) for the funding support through the 2025 Village Development Program grant, contract number: 217/UN5.4.11.K/Kontrak/PM.01.02/2025. We also extend our appreciation to all MSMEs, the local community, and the government of Denai Sarang Burung Village for their active participation and support throughout the implementation of this program. Their contributions and cooperation were invaluable to the success of this research.

REFERENCES

- Bappenas. (2020). *Rencana Aksi Nasional Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan 2020–2024*. Jakarta: Kementerian PPN/Bappenas.
- BPS Kabupaten Deli Serdang. (2023). *Kabupaten Deli Serdang dalam Angka 2023*. Badan Pusat Statistik.
- Dalimunthe, R. F., Ayu, S. F., Anggraini, N., Hutagalung, A. Q., Naully, M., Ramadani, R., Supriadi, S., & Siregar, M. B. (2024). *Precision village data methodology: A transformative approach for sustainable rural development in Indonesia*. *COSTING: Journal of Economic, Business and Accounting*, 7(6). <https://doi.org/10.31539/costing.v7i6.14545>

- Hasanah, U., & Rahmawati, D. (2021). The Role of Halal Certification in Increasing Market Access for MSMEs. *Journal of Halal Studies*, 5(2), 45–57.
- Hermawan, A., & Suryani, T. (2021). Empowering Women in Rural Microenterprises Through Digital Marketing Training. *Journal of Rural Development Studies*, 12(3), 211–225.
- Kabeer, N. (2012). Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth. *SIG Working Paper* 2012/1.
- Kementerian Investasi/BKPM. (2023). *Panduan Perizinan Berusaha Berbasis Risiko (OSS-RBA)*. Jakarta: BKPM.
- Kementerian Koperasi dan UKM. (2022). *Laporan Tahunan UMKM Indonesia 2022*. Jakarta: Kemenkop UKM.
- Nugroho, A., Lestari, D., & Prabowo, H. (2021). The impact of business legalization on SME competitiveness in Indonesia. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 28(4), 623–638.
- OECD. (2021). *Entrepreneurship Policies through a Gender Lens*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Rahmawati, S., & Pratama, B. (2023). Legalization and access to finance for micro and small enterprises in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Business and Management*, 15(2), 77–89.
- Sari, R., & Hartono, T. (2022). Legal identity and consumer trust in Indonesian SMEs. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 47(1), 12–25.
- Tambunan, T. (2019). UMKM di Indonesia: Tantangan dan Strategi Pengembangan. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis*, 32(2), 101–118.
- UN Women. (2017). *Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.