



Strategy for Women Scavengers in Fulfilling the Family Economy in Makassar City (The Case of Scavengers Involving Toddlers in Urban Areas)

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Abstract

Poverty is still a problem in urban areas. Limited skills and employment have caused women from low-income families to also seek work as scavengers or collectors of waste and used goods to help support their family's economy. This study aims to find the characteristics of female scavengers in responding to poor women fulfilling their family's economy. The involvement of children under five in the scavenging process is also a review in finding the distribution of gender roles in scavenger households. This research was conducted in Makassar City using a qualitative approach. Data were obtained from 25 families of female scavengers. The study found that women in scavenging activities involved children between the ages of 1 and 5 years, which was a domestic role and a strategy to get additional income from the community's compassion. Scavenger women make an economic contribution to the family between 40% and 77%. The involvement of children under five in the scavenging process is a form of child exploitation which has yet to become the attention of the Makassar city government.

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Introduction

Poverty is a problem in urban areas. Makassar City Statistical Data shows an increase in poor people of around 4.17%, or 74,690 people, over the past three years (BPS, 2021). This is caused by various factors such as lack of employment, low skills and education and the presence of Covid at the end of 2019 (Fikri & Gopar, 2021). The impact of the pandemic is tremendous on the economic role of women. Around 53.79% of MSMEs in Indonesia are owned by women, with 97% of the workforce being women (Azizah, 2022). Economically, the contribution of women to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is 61%. Even so, unemployment in Indonesia will still reach 8.42 million in 2021.

The development of people who work as scavengers is one of the results of poverty in big cities, including Makassar. The number of scavenger members of the Indonesian Scavenger Association (IPI) in 2019 reached 3.7 million members from 25 provinces. There are still five provinces that still need to be recorded. This number also does not include unrecorded scavengers.

The involvement of women in the household economy is a productive role that has become part of life in urban areas (Roswiyanti, et al. 2022). Increased family needs are the primary basis for women to work apart from carrying out their functions in domestic and social aspects (Telaumbanua & Nugraheni, 2018; Fachry & Alwi, 2018). Women (wives) mainly work because their husband's income is insufficient (Zunaidi & Maghfiroh, 2021; Kauntu and Suraya, 2018).

In addition, limited skills, education and capital make them enter the informal sector, such as becoming scavengers. Jobs that deal with garbage, dirty, full of flies and maggots they ignore for the sake of getting money. Therefore, scavenging is the job rated the lowest, without skills and only done by those who do not have access to other jobs.

Collecting waste from used goods that can still be used for sale is a job that is starting to develop and is being carried out by many poor women in Makassar City. One characteristic of their activities is that they involve children aged under five using carts or some means of conveying goods when collecting or scavenging. Involving toddlers in productive activities is a strategy for scavenger families to get money from the community. This can be seen in the increasing number of young children as beggars or vendors of various food products on the streets (Yuniarti, 2013; Hasanah & Amir, 2020).

Scavenging involving children under five is part of the behaviour of adult beggars who use children to get money, which will create street children as breadwinners. Street children become urban communities and become one of the characteristics of poverty in urban life.

This research describes the life of scavenger women in their contribution to the family economy by involving children to maintain the sustainability of life in Makassar City.

Materials and Methods

The research was conducted in Panakukang District, Makassar City. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a type of phenomenology (Moleong, 2010) which aims to understand the behaviour of women's scavenger families involving toddlers in earning income.

Sampling by purposive sampling and snowball. In the snowball technique, at first, the researcher randomly selected informants and then headed to the next informant with the help of the first informant. The total number of informant families selected was 25 families consisting of female scavengers and scavenger husbands.

Data analysis used the interactive model Milles and Huberman (2014). That is analyzing the data through three steps, namely first, condensing data (data condensation), secondly presenting data (data display), and thirdly drawing conclusions or verification (conclusion drawing and confirmation). Data condensation refers to selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data.

Table 1. Primary Data Collection Matrix on Female Scavenger Families

No	Informant/ respondent	Variable	Method of Collecting Data	Data Analysis
1.	Scavenger Woman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of female scavengers • Background as a scavenger bringing a toddler • Domestic and public roles • Expenditures of scavenger households • Family economic contribution 	Deep interview using a guide	Interactive model of data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 2014)
2.	The husband of a female scavenger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husband's characteristics Scavenger • Domestic and public roles • Income/support for the family economy 	Deep interview	Interview guide and observation sheet

Results and Discussion

The monetary crisis that occurred in 1998 had an impact on all sectors, especially the economy, which caused unemployment everywhere and poverty. The poverty that occurs causes the emergence of social phenomena, one of which is the increase in the number of workers in the informal sector, such as beggars, homeless people and street children. According to Dimas (2013), the factors that cause begging activities are entangled in economic problems. Meanwhile, according to Suhandi & Erlita (2021), the factors that cause someone to beg are due to the powerlessness experienced by people who have difficulty meeting their family needs. Because they cannot earn income and become a group that cannot get out of the poverty cycle. The poor have no hope of progressing and developing due to their lack of education, skills and an impact on business motivation which can become habitual and entrenched. The inheritance of the culture of poverty will be more lasting because one of the characteristics of culture is that it can be learned (Koentjaraningrat, 2002).

Scavengers are an example of informal sector activities in urban areas. Scavengers collect used goods because of demand from industries that recycle used materials (Etnayanti et al., 2020), and the amount of waste in urban areas is more significant than in villages. This is directly proportional to the dense urban population (Fachry & Alpiani, 2021). The presence of scavengers is based on their previous unfavourable work experience due to lack of income and difficulty finding a decent job. Thus there is a tendency for the background of women scavengers to be similar, such as the husband's non-permanent job (daily labourer), reasons for taking toddlers along for scavenging, and the size of the contribution to the family's economy.

Characteristics of Female Scavengers

Distinguishing factors such as age, education and family responsibilities support someone in choosing a job. According to Selvia Aprilyanti (2017), age greatly influences the work productivity of the productive period. Usually, younger people have a higher level of productivity than older workers because they are physically weak and limited. The results of the study describe that female scavengers and their husbands are at a productive age and are still relatively young, namely 23 to 45 years with an education level of 32% not completing elementary school, 48% completing elementary school and 20% junior high school. This is why it is difficult for scavenger families to access decent jobs. The family dependents, on average, are three people. This amount is quite a burden for low-income families, which can result in children needing help to continue their education and become successors to their parents' work as scavengers and daily labourers. This is what is intended as the inheritance of a culture of poverty. Therefore it is essential to have government intervention or non-governmental organizations to empower the children of scavengers. One of the existing policies is Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2008 concerning fostering street children, homeless people, beggars and buskers using street children approach models. However, this policy was made in the context of creating order and reducing public anxiety due to acts of violence that have the potential to be committed by homeless children and beggars, so that it does not touch on efforts to empower children and their families.

Scavenger Women and The Family Economy

The involvement of women in economic activities in helping to provide for the family occurs not only in low-income families but also in middle-income families due to increasingly complex needs. In addition, the role of women in the productive sector is an actualization of women's roles besides the domestic part. This role has shown that women have made a significant contribution to their families and the economic development of society (Susanti & Patonah, 2020). This is in line with Sari & Anwar (2019), who found that women's involvement in earning a living is not only to meet economic needs but as a desire to work.

Based on the results of the study, it was found that the main reason for women to become scavengers was economic factors (68%). The husband's income as daily work was insufficient, and the rest was due to the inability to access work due to a lack of skills and low education (12%). Apart from that, being a scavenger is also caused by having a job since childhood because of the influence of the environment, so children's character is formed to do what they usually see in their environment (Muhtazib et al., 2022). Following his parents' work (12%), as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Reasons for Women to Become Scavengers and Involve Toddlers

Reasons to Be a Scavenger	Total	Percentage
Fulfilling family needs	17	68,0
No jobs can be accessed	3	12,0
Lacks the skills for a better job	2	8,0
Been scavenging since childhood	3	12,0
Total	25	100

Sources: *Primary data processed in 2021*

It was also found that to decide to work as scavengers, respondents made observations and sought information from other scavenger workers. Decisions are made through an awareness and assessment process regarding the amount of income to be earned, the time to be used, the location and distance of scavenging activities to the risks that will occur if you become a scavenger. This process is an individual's choice influenced by other individuals or groups to become part of the work as a scavenger. The study's results found that 64% got information from friends, 24% from husbands and the rest from their own experience (12%). This illustrates that external information is very influential in decision-making by scavengers.

The income earned from scavenger work is still being determined because it depends on the availability of waste or used goods at the search location. Plastic and cardboard, as well as bottles that are still fit for sale, are objects of scavenging activities. The price of junk goods varies; for example, plastic bottles per kilogram at the collector level range from Rp. 2,000 to Rp. 3,000. Plastic bags cost Rp. 250 to Rp. 1,500, and various bottles can reach Rp. 3,500 to Rp. 6,000.

The results of this scavenging are considered sufficient to help the family's economy, in addition to the income from husbands who generally work as non-permanent daily labourers. Meanwhile, the income of scavenger families can be averaged in a month between Rp. 1,200,000 to Rp. 2,050,000. From the expenditure aspect, scavenger households have the largest composition of expenditure on basic needs, namely consumption (28.5%) and the needs of toddlers to purchase milk and snacks (24.4%), housing costs (23.7%) and education costs (9.0%). In addition, scavenger families have loans from other scavengers or used goods collectors (13.3%), which illustrates the apprehensive economic conditions.

The Contribution of Scavenger Women to the Family Economy

The significant role of women scavengers in the family economy is a form of women's strategy in supporting the sustainability of their household life. This is closely related to the work of scavenger husbands as non-permanent daily workers. So that in a month, there may be no income that the scavenger husband gets. Therefore scavenging is a woman's strategy to support her family's economy. Women's contribution to the family economy ranges from 31.7% to 77.7%, as shown in the following table.

Table 3. The Contribution of Women Scavengers to the Household Economy

Average Income Husband (Rp.)/month	Income Scavenger (Rp.)/week	Total Income of Scavenger Family (Rp./week)	Woman Scavenger contribution (%)	Total Respondents
1.400.000	650.000	2.050.000	31,7	8
1.000.000	720.000	1.720.000	72,0	11
800.000	600.000	1.400.000	75,0	33
650.000	500.000	1.200.000	77,7	2

Sources: Primary data processed in 2021

Scavenger Woman Strategy

The size of the family's dependents and routine expenses that must be incurred every month, such as consumer needs, house rent, electricity and water costs, are demanding to be met. Women scavengers use some strategies to get money, namely working from 06.00 to 22.00 at night so that the number of used goods worth selling can be obtained. Including

toddlers in garbage carts to get the community's mercy (100%) and 84% borrow money from fellow scavengers or collectors with the obligation to repay the loan per day with an additional of around 5 to 10%. This is by the concept of a survival strategy as a series of actions that are chosen standardly by individuals and households who are middle to lower socio-economically. Through a strategy carried out by a person, it can increase income by utilizing other sources or reduce expenses by reducing the quantity and quality of goods or services. In addition, the survival strategy applies a double income pattern, which is part of the economic strategy and happens a lot by borrowing money.

In low-income families with various limitations and conditions that are very risky to change, a behavioural strategy and a balancing/adaptation strategy are a form of dealing with the pressures of change. The results of the analysis also show that women scavengers, in the face of limited education, skills and economy, can choose scavenger work as a strategy for earning income. The strategy related to domestic activities is carried out by using carts to include children under five, which is also a medium for getting money from the community's compassion.

Conclusion

From an economic point of view, scavengers are informal sector jobs that generate significant income, especially for low-income families who cannot work in other formal or informal sectors due to limited education and skills. The contribution of women scavengers to the family economy is quite significant, reaching 40% to 77%. The strategy of women scavengers in maintaining their family's economy is to carry out scavenging in full every day by involving children under five as a source of income, even though this is a form of exploitation.

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