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Structuration and Livelihood Transformation among Fishers' Wives in Coastal Pariaman

Fitri Rizki Amalia[1], Fatmariza[2], Ray Silva[3]
[1,2,3]Graduate School, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Small-scale fishing households experience uncertain earnings, yet women's economic participation does not necessarily confer greater authority or reduce domestic obligations. This study examines reported changes in work, skills, and family relations among fishers' wives in Naras I, Pariaman, and interprets how their practices reproduce or modify household structures. A qualitative descriptive study conducted from September to December 2025 involved 37 informants: 30 wives and seven supporting informants. Direct field observation, semi-structured interviews, and documents were analyzed through interactive qualitative procedures, with source, temporal, and method triangulation. Structuration theory is applied as an interpretive framework to the thesis findings. Participants described livelihood entry or reorganization, learning through training and experience, and more consultative decision-making in some families. Earnings helped finance daily needs and schooling, while small returns, capital depletion, debt, and continuing care responsibilities constrained these changes. Family cooperation, market demand, and resource access shaped the opportunities available. The theoretical contribution concerns the coexistence of expanded productive roles and reproduced domestic expectations. The findings support coordinated livelihood and shared-care assistance, without establishing causal effects on educational attainment or complete empowerment.

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Corresponding Author:

Fitri Rizki Amalia
Graduate School, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia
Email: rayys0982@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Small-scale fishing households face income uncertainty associated with weather, seasonal catches, and market relations [1], [2]. In Indonesian coastal communities, these pressures affect daily consumption, schooling expenses, and the capacity to retain savings and productive assets [3], [4]. Understanding household responses therefore requires attention to work on land as well as fishing at sea. Wives' livelihood activities are

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particularly relevant because they can provide cash when fishing earnings are unavailable, although the amount and continuity of their earnings vary.

Women contribute to fisheries and coastal economies through processing, trading, craft production, wage employment, and unpaid family work [5], [6]. Economic participation, however, does not by itself establish empowerment. Moser's account of productive and reproductive roles helps identify overlapping responsibilities [7], while Kabeer distinguishes access to resources, the ability to make choices, and the achievements arising from those choices [8]. These distinctions matter when wives earn income but continue to carry most care responsibilities or depend on husbands for business capital.

Recent fisheries research separates women's productive contributions from their recognition and authority. Chambon and colleagues' synthesis identifies persistent barriers to women's participation in small-scale fisheries management [9]. Gustavsson likewise argues that treating women's enterprise only as diversification can obscure their entrepreneurial roles and the gender relations surrounding them [10]. Roscher and colleagues report heterogeneous livelihood outcomes from diversification, challenging the assumption that additional activities necessarily reduce poverty or vulnerability [11]. Together, these studies make the conditions and distribution of benefits central to evaluating livelihood change.

Indonesian research has documented women's contributions to food production, household income, and domestic and productive work [12], [13], [14], [15]. More recent studies provide complementary explanations. Putri, Genda, and Arifin examine livelihood assets and coping strategies, but report no statistically significant improvement in family welfare in their study [16]. Mulyasih and Sucahya examine the social construction of women's roles in Karangantu [17]. Oktavia and Hidayat describe fish processing and selling alongside domestic work in Air Rami [18], while Dewi, Lisnarini, and Utama identify both livelihood diversification and constraints on participation in formal economic decisions in Batu Karas [19]. These findings caution against equating additional work with improved welfare or authority. The question addressed here is how livelihood practices, access to resources, and the negotiation of family responsibilities interact within one coastal community.

The Minangkabau setting requires a contextual account of gender relations. Gender scholarship emphasizes that domestic responsibilities and resource control are socially organized [20], [21], while household bargaining depends on access to resources and the terms on which they can be used [22]. Syahrizal and Meiyenti's study of fishing communities in Padang shows that matrilineal identity can coexist with substantial male authority in household livelihoods [23]. In agricultural communities in West Sumatra, Natasya and Matsuoka find that land ownership alone does not significantly explain women's household decision-making power [24]. These studies concern different livelihoods and locations, but both caution against inferring everyday authority directly from kinship or nominal ownership. The Naras I case therefore examines how wives actually mobilize resources and negotiate responsibilities.

Giddens's structuration theory is the primary framework for interpreting the findings [25]. Signification concerns the meanings attached to wives' earning, domestic

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responsibility, and educational goals. Domination concerns access to allocative resources, including money, equipment, stock, and business space, and authoritative resources, including the capacity to organize cooperation and participate in decisions. The term refers here to resource relations rather than necessarily to coercion. Legitimation concerns the expectations through which women's productive work and family assistance are accepted or restricted. Sewell and Stones provide supporting accounts of situated agency and the reproduction or modification of structures [26], [27]. Kabeer is used to assess the limits of empowerment, and Agarwal to interpret household negotiation; these perspectives do not replace the structuration framework.

The three dimensions guide a relational interpretation. Signification concerns meanings attached to being a wife, caregiver, and earner; domination concerns command over productive resources and participation in decisions; legitimation concerns accepted responsibilities and responses to departures from them [25], [27]. Badstue and colleagues' agricultural viewpoint emphasizes that local gender norms condition the room available for livelihood innovation [28]. Applied here as a sensitizing comparison, this insight connects skill acquisition to the household conditions under which skills can be used. The analytical question is whether repeated earning and cooperation modify these conditions or reproduce them in a new form.

Naras I is an analytically relevant setting because fishing households operate within an economy of roadside commerce, coastal visitors, and home-based embroidery. The 2024 village profile records 106 fishers and 129 self-employed residents [29]. The combination of uncertain fishing earnings, demand for everyday goods, and established craft skills provides opportunities to examine how households mobilize resources while maintaining care obligations. The study contributes a contextual interpretation of work, skills, and family relations as interconnected practices. It does not claim that these dimensions have previously been absent from empowerment research.

This study asks how fishers' wives describe changes in work, practical knowledge, and family relations; which household and local conditions enable or constrain those practices; and what these changes mean for everyday livelihoods and schooling. Its contribution is a contextual explanation of how expanded productive roles can coexist with continuing domestic obligations in a coastal Minangkabau setting. Rather than treating work participation as an indicator of complete empowerment, the analysis examines the relationship between resource access, negotiated authority, and the reproduction of care expectations.

2. METHOD

This study retains the qualitative descriptive design used in the underlying thesis [30]. The design is appropriate for documenting participants' experiences and reported changes in everyday practices [31], [32]. The thesis interpreted family dynamics through Parsons's structural functionalism and the AGIL scheme. This article develops a distinct structuration interpretation of the reported empirical material; it does not imply that Giddens's categories guided the original fieldwork. Research took place in Naras I Village, North Pariaman District, Pariaman City, West Sumatra, from September to December

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2025. The site was selected purposively because fishing households coexist with small enterprises and home-based craft activities.

The research involved 37 informants, including 30 fishers' wives as the main participant group and seven supporting informants. The thesis's named roster lists five husbands, the village head, and a hamlet head. Wives were recruited through snowball sampling because no complete official list of fishers' wives with additional livelihood activities was available. Recruitment began with an informant considered knowledgeable about the topic, followed by recommendations of other relevant participants. Interviews continued until the researcher considered the information sufficient to address the study questions. The thesis does not document a formal saturation assessment. Wives are identified in this article as W1–W30, following the order of the named roster; supporting informants are identified by their role. Children's experiences are reported through family and village accounts rather than presented as interviews with children.

Data collection combined direct field observation, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and document review. Observation covered livelihood activities, domestic routines, family interactions, and the social environment, with observations recorded in field notes. Interviews with wives and husbands took place in participants' homes at times compatible with their availability; village officials were interviewed at the village office during breaks or other available periods. The interview guide addressed changes in roles, types of work, family support, government programs, financial management, schooling, livelihood constraints, and future expectations. Interview recordings were transcribed for analysis. Documentary material included the village profile, population and occupation records, photographs, and relevant administrative information. These materials were compared with interview and observation findings to check contextual details and consistency. Quotations below are English translations of excerpts reported in the thesis.

Analysis followed the interactive procedures of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing and verification [33]. The thesis describes transcription, coding, and grouping by forms of change, influencing factors, and household implications. For this article, those reported categories and interview excerpts are interpreted through signification, domination, and legitimation. The analysis distinguishes participants' descriptions from theoretical inferences. For example, an account of joint budgeting supports an interpretation of negotiated authority, but does not establish equal control over all household resources. Numeric summaries describe the participant group and reported earnings; they are not population estimates or tests of causal effects.

Credibility was supported through source, temporal, and method triangulation [34]. Accounts from wives were compared with those from husbands and officials; interviews and observations were conducted on different occasions during the four-month fieldwork period; and documentary information was checked against field accounts. This approach supports contextual interpretation, while network-based recruitment and retrospective recall remain potential sources of bias. Participant codes are used in the article to reduce identification, and interviews were scheduled around informants' availability.

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Setting and Participant Profile

The 2024 village profile records 2,425 residents in 732 households, including 106 residents registered as fishers and 129 as self-employed [29]. These figures describe the village, not the sampled households. Interviews and observations indicate that buyers of fresh fish, coastal visitors, road traffic, and local residents create demand for food, beverages, everyday goods, and services. The hamlet head described visitors buying fish for resale as a source of local commercial activity (20 November 2025). W5 similarly reported that fishers and other buyers stopped at her food stall, allowing her to meet kitchen expenses without waiting for her husband's earnings (10 November 2025). Local demand thus provided opportunities alongside the uncertainty of fishing income.

The participant profile comprises 30 wives. Six had primary education, 17 junior secondary education, and seven senior or vocational secondary education. Twenty-five were aged 41–60 years, although the sample also included four women aged 22–40 and one over 60. Twelve had previously been recorded as homemakers; the others had earlier experience in embroidery, tailoring, retail, beverage vending, fried-food sales, or overseas employment. Livelihood change thus included reorganizing existing work as well as entering paid activities. Current occupations included craft work, different forms of vending and retail, and three distinct service or wage roles. Table 1 preserves the categories of the aggregate participant profile.

Table 1. Characteristics and current livelihoods of the 30 wives

Indicator	Category	Number
Age	22–30 years	2
Age	31–40 years	2
Age	41–50 years	12
Age	51–60 years	13
Age	Over 60 years	1
Education	Primary	6
Education	Junior secondary	17
Education	Senior or vocational secondary	7
Previous role	Homemaker	12
Current work	Embroidery or tailoring	8
Current work	Beadwork	4
Current work	Breakfast selling	1
Current work	Coffee or beverage selling	2
Current work	Lotek selling	1
Current work	Everyday goods or grocery retail	5
Current work	Nasi baka selling	4
Current work	Fried food selling	2
Current work	Cleaning service	1
Current work	Catering employee	1
Current work	Paid childcare	1

3.2. Forms of Transformation

Occupational change took different forms. Some wives began paid work after a period centered on domestic responsibilities, while others expanded or reorganized existing

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livelihoods. W13, a nasi baka seller, described the former pathway: 'Previously, I only managed the household and cared for the children. ... Now I sell nasi baka in front of the house' (12 November 2025). She used the proceeds for everyday needs and schooling expenses. W21 described taking paid childcare work after her own children began school (12 November 2025). These accounts connect livelihood entry to both financial needs and changes in the availability of care time, rather than to economic motivation alone.

Home space was a practical resource, but occupations differed in their conditions. W5 sold food in front of her home, while W6 undertook beadwork using materials supplied by an employer. W6 reported a piece rate of IDR 3,000 per 100 bead arrangements and stated: 'Sometimes we use our old savings, while the money from my work is still small' (10 November 2025). By contrast, W2 worked as a cleaner outside the home under fixed working hours and described children helping with housework before school (17 November 2025). These differences show why home enterprise, piecework, and wage employment should not be treated as equivalent opportunities. The evidence supports livelihood diversification [13], [14], [18], while W6's account demonstrates that productive work can coexist with continued financial strain.

Roscher and colleagues distinguish diversification through greater involvement in an existing activity, adding activities, or moving into different sectors [11]. The Naras accounts include both entry into paid work and the expansion of earlier enterprises, alongside different household combinations of fishing and non-fishing work. W6's low piece rate and continuing reliance on savings show why the existence of an additional income source cannot itself demonstrate an improved livelihood. This distinction also avoids conflating women's employment with a household's withdrawal from fishing.

Knowledge and skills developed through family learning, training, customer requests, and digital information. W8 described applying embroidery training and acquiring a sewing machine despite difficulties accumulating the purchase money (14 November 2025). W1 reported learning to adjust embroidery models and colors in response to customers from outside the village (17 November 2025). W24 used online recipes to improve fried-food preparation, linking repeated trials to product changes. These examples identify specific learning practices rather than assuming that all participants acquired the same managerial competencies. In a structuration interpretation, practical knowledge enables action, while equipment and learning opportunities condition whether that knowledge can generate earnings.

Relational change was evident in some retrospective accounts of household negotiation. W5 explained: 'Now, after I have my own income from selling ketupat, we discuss things together more often' (20 November 2025). She described consultation about household purchases, school expenses, and the use of business earnings. W9 reported joint problem-solving when catches were low, with her selling goods and her husband continuing to fish or seeking other work (20 November 2025). A husband independently described supporting W10's nasi baka business: 'I help provide the place and facilities, while my wife manages the sales every day' (17 November 2025). These accounts indicate cooperation and participation in particular decisions. They do not establish equal authority over property, debt, or major household investments.

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Acosta and colleagues' Ugandan agricultural study shows that reported joint decisions encompass different degrees of consultation and final authority [35]. This comparison helps delimit the Naras interpretation: W5's account evidences increased discussion, but the available interviews do not establish her ability to veto expenditure or control major assets. The relevant change is participation in specified decisions, whose durability would require further evidence from household pairs.

Domestic obligations continued to shape these changes. W23 combined retail work with caring for a grandchild: 'When my husband is at sea, I leave the housework because my grandchild cannot be left alone' (13 November 2025). W8 described earlier financial conflict and later improvement as customers increased, while also stating that women's earning should not neglect responsibilities at home (21 November 2025). Family help therefore remained conditional on availability, and acceptance of paid work coexisted with expectations of care. This pattern is consistent with research on multiple roles and socially constructed gender expectations [7], [15], [17]. Table 2 distinguishes empirical indicators from theoretical interpretation and the limits of the evidence.

The care constraint also changes how enterprise should be understood. Gustavsson's analysis highlights the gendered and life-course context of women's entrepreneurship in fishing families [11]. W21's entry into childcare work after her children started school and W23's interruption of retail work while caring for a grandchild illustrate this connection locally. Home-based work may make earning feasible within existing obligations, yet it can also leave the gendered allocation of those obligations intact. In structuration terms, accommodation enables action while potentially reproducing the rule that women remain responsible for care.

Table 2. Structuration interpretation and evidential boundaries

Concept	Empirical indicator	Interpretation	Boundary
Signification	W13 describes entry into earning; W7 prioritizes schooling	Paid work acquires meaning in relation to family needs and future goals	Retrospective accounts; no systematic measure of changing beliefs
Domination	W26 obtains capital; W22 draws on livestock and remittances; W5 describes consultation	Allocative resources enable work; cooperation and decision participation concern authoritative resources.	Access to earnings does not establish equal authority over all assets.
Legitimation	W10's husband supplies facilities; W23 receives care help when her husband is home	Productive participation is accepted through cooperation alongside continuing care expectations.	Acceptance is conditional; institutional change is not demonstrated.

3.3. Internal and External Drivers

Individual motivation and future expectations interacted with changes in household needs and local demand. W7 connected beadwork to her wish that children have better educational opportunities than she had experienced (14 November 2025). W27 linked opening a shop to more residents, increasing demand for basic goods, and the distance to

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the main market (18 November 2025). These are participants' accounts of perceived change, not a measured demographic trend. Motivation operated at the individual level, while household needs and perceived market opportunities shaped the conditions of action. These levels explain why similar earning intentions could lead to different occupations and schedules.

Adaptive practices included acquiring skills, adjusting products, using available home space, and scheduling work around care. W8's training account and W24's use of online cooking information show how learning can expand livelihood options. W21's childcare work became possible after her children started school. Such accounts fit situated agency: women make practical choices, but their options depend on resources, family circumstances, and obligations [25], [26], [27]. Available excerpts do not support systematic comparisons by age or education. Nor do they establish that individual motivation alone explains entry into paid work.

External conditions included uncertain fishing income, market access, family assistance, and learning through contact with customers and people outside the village. W4 reported that bad weather kept her husband at home, where he helped her breakfast business (15 October 2025). W11 described her husband's work on another person's boat and low catches as reasons to learn embroidery (16 October 2025). W1's response to unfamiliar customer preferences illustrates how outside interaction expanded product knowledge. These conditions resemble adaptive livelihood responses described in other coastal communities [36], [37]. However, also show that the local economy supplies both pressures to earn and potential customers.

Capital access influenced entry and continuity. W26 began selling lotek after a period of good catches allowed her husband to provide start-up money, but she sometimes needed further funds when profits were small (25 November 2025). W22 financed a shop by selling a cow and avoided rent by trading from home. Household use of stock reduced inventory, after which she waited for remittances from adult children to replenish it (26 November 2025). W20 borrowed through a mobile cooperative to meet schooling costs (3 November 2025). These accounts show the overlap of household consumption, business capital, and debt. They support interpreting money, equipment, and space as allocative resources, while decision-making and family cooperation concern authoritative resources [38]. Financial literacy and access to support are relevant [38], but the interviews do not justify a quantified estimate of their effects.

3.4. Household Livelihoods, Schooling and Family Relations

Reported monthly earnings among the 30 wives ranged from IDR 100,000 to IDR 4,000,000, with a median of IDR 1,800,000. These descriptive figures summarize the participant income records. The records do not consistently clarify whether the amounts represent net profit, gross receipts, or wages, and no repeated monthly series is available. They therefore cannot establish household income shares or measured income growth. Interview accounts provide clearer evidence of how earnings were used. W15 described spending her income when her husband could not fish and saving it when fishing earnings were available (15 November 2025). This timing supported everyday consumption,

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although W6's low earnings and W22's stock depletion demonstrate continuing vulnerability.

Education emerged as a stated priority supported through earnings, borrowing, family encouragement, and public assistance. W20 described prioritizing children's schooling while borrowing to meet costs (3 November 2025). W19 reported children completing school and university and later sending money home (3 November 2025). The village head also identified scholarship support, including KIP and SAGA SAJA, and noted that some children stopped after junior secondary school to work away from home (5 November 2025). These accounts show variation and alternative sources of educational support. Children's attainment was not recorded in a complete comparable household series. The findings therefore support claims about educational aspirations and financing, rather than a numerical rate of intergenerational mobility or a causal effect of wives' work on attainment.

Accounts of joint budgeting and family assistance suggest that some wives had a stronger voice in everyday decisions. Agarwal's bargaining perspective helps explain why access to earnings and productive resources may influence negotiation [22]. However, W5's increased consultation cannot be attributed solely to income: age, marriage duration, children's schooling, and accumulated family experience may also matter. W10's husband emphasized joint provision of business facilities, and W1 described assistance from her husband and children with orders and domestic work. These accounts identify household cooperation and wider relational resources, consistent with research on social capital among fishers' wives [39]. They do not establish a collective women's organization or uniform redistribution of decision-making power.

The central tension is that livelihood participation can support household needs while expanding women's workload. W23's caregiving responsibilities and W2's fixed working hours illustrate constraints that differ by occupation and life stage. Low piecework earnings, household consumption of stock, and borrowing for schooling further limit economic independence. Kabeer's distinction between resources, agency, and achievements is useful because earning alone cannot demonstrate empowerment [8]. Putri and colleagues' finding of no statistically significant welfare improvement despite livelihood strategies [40] reinforces the need for caution, while Dewi and colleagues identify limits on women's formal economic decision-making [19]. Household resilience is used here to mean participants' reported capacity to maintain essential consumption and schooling during fishing-income interruptions; it is not a measured resilience index.

Szaboova and colleagues frame women's contributions to fisheries resilience through relational wellbeing and caution against placing additional responsibility on women without protecting their own wellbeing [41]. The Naras findings identify the same analytical tension: support for consumption and schooling can coincide with debt, low returns, and constrained time. Household resilience and women's empowerment therefore require separate assessment. A family's capacity to maintain expenses does not establish that the woman providing that support has gained rest, financial autonomy, or broader decision-making authority.

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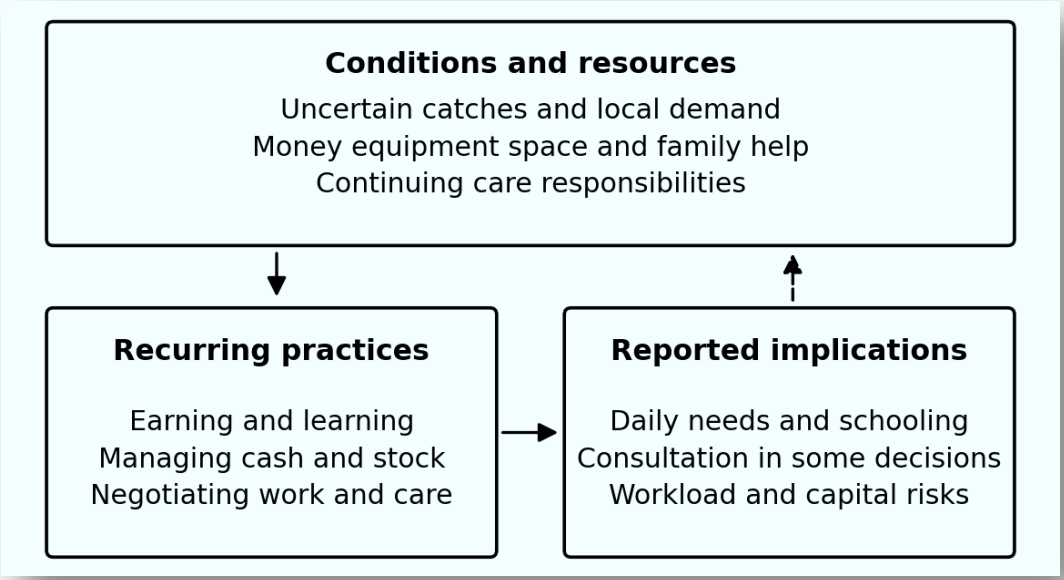


Figure 1. Interpretive model of livelihood practices and household role negotiation

Figure 1 summarizes an interpretation of the reported accounts, rather than a longitudinally validated causal model. Short-term use of savings or loans is treated as coping, changes in work and scheduling as adaptation, and additional earnings sources as diversification. Transformation refers more narrowly to reported changes in meanings, participation, and accepted responsibilities. The structuration contribution is the coexistence of change and reproduction: wives mobilize skills, money, space, and cooperation to broaden productive roles, while care expectations remain influential. Repeated practices may reshape household expectations, but the available material does not demonstrate institutional change across the village.

This interpretation specifies how change can remain partial. Customer interaction and repeated sales can broaden the meaning of wives' productive roles; equipment, capital, and cooperation can make those roles practicable; and family acceptance can legitimate earning under continued expectations of care. These processes suggest modification of selected household practices rather than replacement of the entire gender order. The distinction also connects household analysis to governance: women's contributions and consultation within families cannot be assumed to translate into participation in fisheries institutions [9], a scale beyond the present evidence.

Practical recommendations follow from the constraints described by participants. W8's difficulty purchasing equipment and W26's dependence on additional capital indicate a need for accessible finance and support in separating business funds from household expenditure. W1's changing customer requests and W24's product experimentation suggest market-linked training and appropriate digital learning support. W23's interrupted work and W2's fixed schedule justify attention to shared care and suitable program timing. Support for schooling should also connect families with scholarships and public services, as the village head's account identifies sources beyond

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wives' earnings. Entrepreneurship should remain one option alongside wage work, social protection, and action on fishing-income insecurity; the study does not establish that business training alone can resolve coastal poverty.

Evidence from Indonesian livelihood programs supports attention to these relational conditions. Stacey and colleagues' gender evaluation distinguishes activities that reach women from approaches that address unequal norms and relations [42], while their broader assessment emphasizes the enabling and constraining conditions of livelihood interventions [42]. For Naras I, finance and training should therefore be considered alongside control over business funds, feasible schedules, and the sharing of care. Program evaluation could track retained earnings, workload, and influence over specified decisions as separate outcomes. These are implications for future support and evaluation, rather than effects demonstrated by this study.

3.5. Limitations of the Study

The findings concern one village and a network-recruited group of wives with livelihood activities. They cannot estimate participation or outcomes among all fishers' wives, including those outside recruitment networks or whose enterprises had ceased. Retrospective accounts support reported changes but do not provide prospective before-and-after measurements. Selected husband and official accounts offer corroboration, while independent coding audit and formal member checking were not documented. Income values lack a consistent gross-versus-net definition, and children's attainment was not measured systematically. The interviews also provide limited evidence about major asset decisions, time use, and participation in formal governance. These boundaries constrain generalization and claims of causal resilience, empowerment, or enduring transformation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined reported livelihood changes among 30 fishers' wives in Naras I and their implications for family life. Participants described entry into or reorganization of paid work, learning through training and everyday experience, and more consultative decisions in some households. Family support, customer demand, fishing-income uncertainty, available capital, and care responsibilities shaped these practices. Earnings helped meet daily and educational expenses, while low returns, depleted stock, and debt continued to constrain some families. The data support educational financing and aspirations rather than measured intergenerational mobility.

Through structuration theory, these accounts suggest that productive participation can modify meanings and selected household arrangements while reproducing expectations of women's domestic responsibility. This contextual contribution depends on distinguishing resource access from decision-making authority and participation from full empowerment. Practical support should combine relevant skills and finance with shared care, schooling assistance, and wider protection against livelihood insecurity. The single-village setting, snowball recruitment, retrospective accounts, and lack of comparable net-income records limit generalization and causal inference. Comparative and longitudinal research involving household pairs could examine the durability of changes in workload,

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resource control, and decision-making, including the relationship between matrilineal institutions and actual authority.

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