



Simple Financial Management in Housewife Communities: A Qualitative Study on Daily Financial Management Patterns

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores the intricate financial management practices of housewives in Salatiga, Central Java, unveiling a sophisticated ecosystem of economic adaptation that challenges conventional understandings of financial literacy and gender dynamics in resource-constrained environments. Employing a rigorous methodology of in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis with twenty-five housewives, the research reveals complex adaptive strategies that transform economic limitations into innovative financial practices—including nuanced recording systems, community-based risk management, and intricate social financial networks. The study's originality lies in its profound examination of how housewives develop sophisticated financial intelligence through collective knowledge transfer, challenging prevailing narratives of financial vulnerability by demonstrating remarkable agency, resilience, and strategic economic navigation within bounded patriarchal structures. By illuminating the intricate informal financial mechanisms that emerge from lived experiences, this research provides critical insights for financial inclusion efforts, policy development, and understanding the transformative potential of community-driven economic practices, ultimately repositioning housewives as active financial innovators rather than passive economic subjects

INTRODUCTION

In the complex socioeconomic landscape of Indonesia, the role of housewives as primary financial managers remains deeply entrenched within family structures, reflecting both cultural traditions and economic necessities that shape household dynamics across the archipelago. The dominance of women in domestic financial management is particularly pronounced in middle to lower-income communities, where women shoulder significant responsibilities despite facing structural disadvantages in financial literacy and economic empowerment (Palupiningtyas et al., 2023). According to research from the Financial Services Authority (OJK), Indonesian women consistently demonstrate lower financial literacy rates (36.1%) compared to their male counterparts (40.6%), creating a paradoxical situation where those most responsible for daily financial decisions often have the least formal preparation for this critical role. This gendered dimension of household economics represents not merely a technical disparity but a manifestation of broader social structures that simultaneously assign financial responsibility to women while limiting their access to financial knowledge and decision-making autonomy in long-term financial planning.

The complexity of household financial management in Indonesia is further magnified by the social reproduction role that women perform, which often goes unrecognized and undervalued in economic calculations (Casciello et al., 2025). Sigiro's research on the care economy in Indonesia highlights how women's unpaid domestic work, including financial management responsibilities, remains overlooked in macro-economic contexts despite its crucial contribution to family stability and welfare. This invisibility extends to financial activities, where women's labor in stretching limited resources, managing daily cash flows, and developing complex adaptive strategies becomes categorized as merely "reproductive work" rather than productive economic activity. The resulting undervaluation creates both practical challenges in resource allocation and psychological burdens, as women perform increasingly sophisticated financial management in environments of scarcity without corresponding recognition of this skilled labor. This dynamic represents what Kaber describes as "bounded power," where women exercise considerable agency within strictly defined domains while remaining constrained by patriarchal structures that limit their broader economic participation and autonomy (Bustani et al., 2022).

The evolution of financial management practices among Indonesian housewives reflects remarkable adaptability and innovation within resource constraints. Communities of housewives develop sophisticated informal financial systems that function as parallel financial institutions, offering services analogous to formal banking but adapted to local needs and capacities (Abdullah et al., 2019). Research on household finances reveals the emergence of complex "financial portfolios" among even the most economically disadvantaged households, including rotating savings and credit associations (*arisan*), collective purchasing arrangements, emergency fund networks, and community risk-sharing mechanisms. These informal systems demonstrate

what Rutherford terms "shadow banking" capabilities, where communities develop alternative financial architectures when formal systems remain inaccessible or inappropriate to their needs. Far from simple coping mechanisms, these community-based financial practices represent sophisticated collective adaptations that transform individual vulnerability into community resilience through carefully structured social arrangements that pool resources, distribute risk, and create accountability mechanisms outside formal economic structures.

The intersection of tradition and transformation characterizes contemporary financial management practices among Indonesian housewives, as deeply rooted gender norms encounter changing economic realities. Research on gender roles in household financial decision-making reveals persistent patterns where women manage daily expenditures while men maintain authority over major financial decisions, investment strategies, and long-term planning. This division mirrors what financial researchers have termed the "whole wage system," where operational control over daily finances does not necessarily translate into broader financial autonomy or decision-making authority. Particularly in semi-urban and rural communities, financial management practices remain influenced by cultural values that emphasize "prudence" and "sacrifice" as female virtues, shaping how women approach financial management with orientations toward conservation, risk-avoidance, and family security rather than growth or investment. These values create distinct gendered approaches to finance that privilege stability over opportunity, reflecting both practical adaptations to vulnerability and cultural constructions of appropriate female economic behavior that may limit wealth accumulation strategies.

The emergence of community-based approaches to financial empowerment represents one of the most promising developments in addressing the structural challenges facing housewives as financial managers. Research by Rahmatia and colleagues identifies multiple advantages of community-centered financial education, including experience-based learning, sustained social support, contextual adaptation of knowledge, and collective accountability mechanisms. These community approaches transform abstract financial concepts into practical, applicable knowledge by grounding them in shared experiences and collective problem-solving. As communities of housewives develop their own financial norms, practices, and support systems, they create spaces for knowledge transfer that overcome traditional barriers to financial inclusion while respecting local values and realities. These emergent educational ecosystems suggest possibilities for bridging formal and informal financial systems by recognizing and building upon the sophisticated financial intelligences already present in communities rather than imposing external models that may fail to address local needs or realities. Positioning housewives not as passive recipients of financial knowledge but as active financial innovators acknowledges their agency while creating more effective pathways for enhancing financial capabilities across diverse communities.

Despite the crucial role of housewives as primary financial managers in Indonesian households, there exists a significant gap in understanding the complex daily financial management practices employed by these women, particularly in communities with limited economic resources. The paradox lies in how women with constrained access to formal financial education and lower literacy rates (36.1% compared to men's 40.6%) develop sophisticated adaptive strategies to navigate financial scarcity while receiving minimal recognition for this economic labor. This research aims to address this knowledge deficit by: (1) identifying and describing the patterns of daily financial management implemented by housewife communities in Salatiga City; (2) analyzing the adaptive strategies and mechanisms they develop to overcome limited financial resources; (3) exploring the underlying factors influencing financial management practices within housewife communities; and (4) understanding how community dynamics shape and transform individual financial behaviors. By examining these dimensions through a qualitative case study approach, this research seeks to bridge theoretical understanding with practical applications, ultimately contributing to more contextually appropriate financial education initiatives that build upon existing community strengths rather than imposing external models that may fail to address local realities and needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Household Financial Management

Within the complex ecosystem of household financial management, particularly in developing contexts like Indonesia, families construct intricate financial architectures that transcend simple budgeting to encompass sophisticated risk management systems and social capital mobilization. Household financial systems operate through what they term "financial portfolios of practice" where formal, semiformal, and informal financial mechanisms are strategically integrated to address multiple concurrent needs—immediate consumption, emergency preparedness, asset building, and social obligation fulfillment (Elim & Tapatfeto, 2021). In Indonesian communities, these portfolios manifest through practices like *jimpitan* (community-based microsavings), *arisan* (rotating savings groups), and neighborhood emergency funds that function as informal insurance against health crises or income disruptions (Aryawati et al., 2023). What distinguishes these systems from conventional financial management frameworks is their embeddedness in social relationships, where financial decisions are not merely economic calculations but negotiations of social standing, reciprocity obligations, and community integration (Demirag et al., 2020). The temporal dimension of these practices is equally significant, as households develop cyclical financial rhythms synchronized with income patterns, agricultural seasons, religious celebrations, and community events, cdescribes as "asset transformation sequences" where resources flow between different forms—cash, goods, social claims, and productive assets—depending on the household's position in these multiple overlapping cycles (Amalia et al., 2021; Amanah, 2018). This sophisticated choreography of resources ultimately demonstrates that financial management in resource-constrained environments represents not a simplified version of

conventional financial planning but rather a more complex, socially embedded, and adaptively responsive system requiring considerable skill, foresight, and social intelligence (Ahmed & Bhuyan, 2020).

Gender Role in Family Financial Management

The gendered dimensions of household financial management extend far beyond simple task division, manifesting instead as deeply embedded power structures that shape economic agency within families (Friedline et al., 2021a). Women's financial management roles often constitute what she terms "bounded authority" - significant responsibility without commensurate decision-making power, particularly evident in Indonesian contexts where women manage complex daily budgets but require spousal approval for expenditures exceeding certain thresholds (Elshaer et al., 2022). This paradoxical position creates "responsibility without resources," where women bear accountability for household wellbeing while navigating severe resource constraints and limited autonomy over major financial decisions (Friedline et al., 2021b). Beyond operational dynamics, research shows that financial matters are typically considered "the domain of men" with "money chores" like planning and investing allocated to male spouses, despite women's central role in daily financial operations (Herawati et al., 2021). The psychological dimension further complicates this landscape, women internalize contradictory identities as both "household financial managers" and "financial dependents," creating cognitive dissonance that shapes risk tolerance and financial behavior (Mustafa et al., 2020). Households with more egalitarian financial decision-making demonstrated greater financial resilience during economic shocks, more diversified savings strategies, and higher rates of entrepreneurial investment (Zebua & Palupiningtyas, 2024). Furthermore, intergenerational transmission of these patterns occurs through "financial socialization," where children observe and internalize gendered approaches to money management, perpetuating these structures across generations unless deliberately interrupted through financial education initiatives specifically addressing gender dynamics in economic decision-making (Dewanti & Asandimitra, 2021).

Community Approach in Increasing Financial Capacity

Community-based financial models represent transformative ecosystems that transcend simple knowledge transfer to create "economic microsolidarities" - interconnected support systems where financial practices are embedded within social relationships and collective welfare (Rahayu, 2022). The most effective women's financial collectives operate through three simultaneous mechanisms: financial aggregation (pooling limited resources to achieve scale), risk distribution (spreading individual financial vulnerabilities across the group), and knowledge circulation (facilitating multi-directional learning rather than top-down instruction) (Siregar, 2019). The embeddedness of these communities in existing social structures provides "infrastructures of trust" that reduce transaction costs and create accountability mechanisms more effective than external enforcement (Fitriyah et al., 2020). Particularly significant is the evolution of "hybrid financial citizenship," where community groups serve as intermediaries between informal household economies and formal financial institutions, translating between these different economic languages and

facilitating gradual integration (Fornero & Prete, 2023). In Indonesian contexts, previous studies longitudinal study of women's savings groups documented how these communities function as "financial incubators" where members progressively develop greater financial capabilities through practical experimentation in low-risk environments before pursuing more complex financial engagements (Alamsyah, 2020). What distinguishes successful community finance models from less effective interventions is their recognition of women's existing financial agency and knowledge – positioning participants as co-creators of financial knowledge rather than recipients of financial instruction, and validating indigenous financial practices while selectively incorporating formal financial tools that enhance rather than replace existing capabilities

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research employs a case study approach to explore financial management practices among housewives in Salatiga, a municipality located in Central Java, Indonesia. Salatiga presents a compelling research setting with its diverse population of approximately 196,599 residents (as of 2020) distributed across several districts, primarily consisting of Javanese inhabitants with a mix of Chinese Indonesians and other ethnic groups. The city's demographic composition offers a rich tapestry of socioeconomic backgrounds ranging from middle to lower-income communities, where women's roles in household financial management remain particularly pronounced. Data collection occurred over a two-month intensive fieldwork period from July to August 2024, strategically timed to capture normal household financial cycles that typically revolve around monthly income patterns. The research focused on housewives from different districts within Salatiga, purposively selected to represent diverse educational backgrounds, family compositions, and economic circumstances, thereby ensuring a comprehensive understanding of varied financial management approaches within similar geographical contexts.

The primary data collection method consisted of in-depth interviews with twenty-five housewives who serve as primary financial managers in their households. These semi-structured interviews were meticulously designed to elicit detailed narratives about daily financial practices, adaptation strategies, decision-making processes, and community interactions related to financial management. Each interview session lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and was conducted in the participants' homes or community gathering places to ensure comfort and contextual relevance. The interview protocol was developed using a progressive focusing approach, beginning with general questions about household financial responsibilities before delving into specific practices, challenges, and community-based financial activities. Supplementary data collection included non-participant observation of community financial activities (such as arisan meetings and collective purchasing events) and document analysis of household financial records, when available. This triangulation of methods enhanced the validity of findings by providing

multiple perspectives on the phenomenon under study and capturing both articulated and tacit knowledge about financial management practices.

Data analysis followed a systematic approach utilizing ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software, which facilitated the organization, coding, and interpretation of the extensive textual data generated through interviews and field notes. ATLAS.ti was selected for its robust capabilities in analyzing qualitative data, particularly for coding and analyzing transcripts, creating network diagrams of conceptual relationships, and facilitating thematic analysis. The analytical process began with open coding to identify initial concepts, followed by axial coding to establish relationships between categories, and finally selective coding to integrate findings around core themes. This coding strategy aligned with the study's exploratory nature and allowed for both inductive development of concepts from the data and connection to existing theoretical frameworks on household financial management. The research team conducted regular analytical meetings to discuss emerging patterns, resolve coding discrepancies, and refine the interpretive framework. This collaborative approach to analysis strengthened the reliability of findings by incorporating multiple perspectives and maintaining analytical rigor throughout the research process. Findings were further validated through member checking with selected participants, ensuring that interpretations accurately represented the lived experiences of the housewives in the study.

RESULT

Brief Profile of the Housewife Community

The housewife community in Salatiga City has been formed since 2015, starting from PKK activities which then developed into various activity groups such as ROSCAs, religious gatherings, and savings and loan groups. This community is informal with voluntary membership, although there is a basic organizational structure consisting of a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. Community activities are carried out regularly, with formal meetings once a month and more frequent informal interactions. The background of community members is quite diverse in terms of age, education, and economic conditions, although the majority are at the middle to lower socio-economic level. The similarity of roles as the main manager of family finances becomes the main binding factor in this community.

Daily Financial Management Patterns

1. Recording and Monitoring System

Research results show variations in financial recording practices among housewives. Of the eight informants, five of them perform routine expense recording although in a very simple form. The recording tools used are generally small books or notes, with manual recording without the help of digital technology.

"I always have a small book to record daily shopping. The contents are simple, what date, what I bought, how much was spent. If not recorded, I often get confused about what the money was spent on." (HW-01)

"Every day I record expenses in a book. The method is simple, in the morning I first write down the shopping plan for today, then in the evening I

check again what has been bought and the total. If there is any leftover, I write it down too." (HW-06)

Meanwhile, the other three informants do not perform formal recording, but develop mental monitoring systems and physical money segregation strategies to control expenditure.

"I never record, but I have envelopes for various needs. There are envelopes for daily shopping, for children's school fees, for ROSCAs. So I can know if the money is still there or has been spent." (HW-03)

Interestingly, education level does not always correlate with recording practices. HW-05 who only has an elementary school education actually has a quite detailed recording system, while HW-07 who has a bachelor's degree relies more on digital applications although not consistently.

2. Expenditure Prioritization

All informants show a clear prioritization system in expenditure allocation. Priority categories are generally divided into:

- Primary Needs: Including staple foods, children's school fees, and routine bills (electricity, water)
- Secondary Needs: Including clothing, household appliances, and communication costs
- Tertiary Needs: Including entertainment, accessories, and other non-essential items

"When I get shopping money from my husband, first of all I separate it for rice, side dishes for a week, and children's school fees. That cannot be used for anything else. The rest is for other needs, or if there is any leftover, it's saved." (HW-08)

"Mental accounting" strategies or mental bookkeeping are clearly visible in this allocation practice, where housewives categorize money based on its purpose even though physically the money is in the same place.

3. Cash Management and Daily Liquidity

Daily liquidity management becomes one of the important aspects in housewife financial management. Some identified strategies include:

- Gradual Purchasing: Buying daily needs in small quantities but more frequently, to ensure liquidity and prevent waste "I prefer to shop a little bit every day. If shopping in large quantities at once, sometimes things rot or are not stored properly." (HW-02)
- Cash Buffer: Keeping a small amount of cash as a reserve for sudden needs "I always set aside Rp50,000 for emergencies. I never spend all the money I have, because there will definitely be some sudden need." (HW-01)
- Rotation Debt System: Utilizing informal credit from regular shops or stores to overcome short-term liquidity gaps "If it's the end of the month and money is running low, sometimes I go into debt first at Mrs. Tini's shop. Later at the beginning of the month after my husband gets paid, I pay it off immediately." (HW-03)

These practices reflect adaptation to income patterns that are often unstable and the need to ensure the availability of funds for daily needs.

Adaptive Strategies in Facing Economic Limitations

1. Income Source Diversification

Despite having the status of housewives, some informants develop additional economic activities to support family finances. These activities are generally carried out at home or around the living environment, so they do not interfere with the main role in taking care of the household.

"I sell wet cakes consigned to shops. I make them at night, deliver them early in the morning, and by noon it's finished. It's quite good, getting an additional Rp300,000 to Rp500,000 per month." (HW-05)

"Since a year ago I started selling online, selling clothes and cosmetics. I handle the orders when the children are at school, so it doesn't interfere with tasks at home." (HW-06)

This diversification strategy not only increases family income but also provides financial autonomy space for housewives to manage personal money without completely depending on their husband's income.

2. Resource Pooling through Communal Systems

Community becomes a space for housewives to develop various communal resource management systems. Some identified practices include:

- **ROSCAs:** Besides its social function, ROSCAs become a forced saving mechanism and access to funds in large amounts in rotation "ROSCAs are like saving, but there is responsibility to others so it's more disciplined. When it's your turn, you can buy something expensive like a refrigerator or washing machine." (HW-04)
- **Jimpitan:** Daily collection of rice or small change in small amounts for community social funds "Every day we set aside a glass of rice for jimpitan. It doesn't feel burdensome, but when collected it can be used to help residents who are sick or have a misfortune." (HW-08)
- **Collective Buying:** Collective purchase of goods to get cheaper prices "When buying rice, we often pool money from several families, buy one sack then divide it. The price becomes cheaper than buying in retail." (HW-02)

3. Consumption Optimization System

Housewives develop various strategies to optimize consumption with limited resources, including:

- **Food Ingredient Substitution:** Replacing food ingredients with more economical alternatives but still meeting nutritional needs "If meat is expensive, I replace it with tempeh or tofu. If salted fish is expensive, I choose cheaper pindang fish but still has protein." (HW-01)
- **Recycling and Repurposing:** Reusing items to minimize expenses "Children's clothes that have become too small are not immediately thrown away, but made into cleaning cloths or small pillow cases. Used bottles are also kept for spice containers or oil." (HW-03)
- **Micro Agriculture:** Growing simple vegetables and herbs in the house yard "In the backyard of my house I plant chili, basil, and water spinach. Although little, it's quite helpful in reducing daily shopping expenses." (HW-05)

These practices reflect creativity and adaptability in facing economic limitations, as well as being sustainable saving strategies.

Financial Risk Management Mechanisms

1. Micro-Scale Emergency Funds

Despite limited income, all informants show awareness of the importance of emergency funds. However, the concept of emergency funds applied differs from the conventional definition in financial literature. Emergency funds in this housewife context are micro in nature, with relatively small amounts and short term.

"Every day I set aside Rp5,000 or Rp10,000, kept in a special tin. This money cannot be used for regular shopping, only for sudden necessities such as sick children or sudden school needs." (HW-06)

"I always keep Rp200,000 in a separate envelope that is hidden. That is emergency money that should not be touched unless really urgent." (HW-04)

These emergency funds become an important mechanism in managing short-term risks, although they have not reached long-term risks such as job loss or chronic health problems.

2. Social Support Networks

Social networks become a form of "informal insurance" important for housewives. In emergency situations that require more funds than available, family networks, neighbors, and communities become the main sources of support.

"When my child was sick and had to be hospitalized, I borrowed money from relatives and neighbors. Thank God, everyone helped, some loaned Rp50,000, some Rp100,000, so it was collected for hospital costs." (HW-03)

The community also develops a "social dues" system used to help members experiencing difficulties. This system becomes a form of communal insurance based on the principles of reciprocity and solidarity.

"In our community there is a dues of Rp10,000 per month for social funds. If someone is sick or dies, the funds are used to help. The system rotates, whoever needs it is helped." (HW-01)

3. Savings Diversification Strategy

Interestingly, some informants develop micro-scale savings diversification strategies, by placing "savings" in various forms and locations.

"I have several places to save money. There is under the mattress, in the clothes closet, in used cans. So if there's a sudden need, there's always a reserve. Not stored in one place, afraid of being tempted to use it all at once." (HW-05)

"Besides cash, I also keep small gold. Last year I bought one gram, now it has become three grams. If there is an urgent need, gold can be sold quickly." (HW-06)

This strategy reflects an intuitive understanding of the principle of diversification to reduce risk, although applied at a very limited scale.

Dynamics of Financial Decision-Making in the Family

1. Financial Communication Patterns

Communication about finances in the family shows significant variations among the informants. The three main patterns identified are:

- **Open and Collaborative Communication:** Couples openly discuss the financial condition and make decisions together "Every time my husband gets paid, we sit together to discuss what the money is for this month. My husband also knows exactly how much money we have and what it is spent on." (HW-07)
- **Partial Communication:** Discussion is limited to big financial decisions, while daily management is entirely in the wife's hands "For buying big items like a motorcycle or house renovation, we discuss together. But for daily shopping, my husband entrusts it entirely to me, as long as the needs are met." (HW-04)
- **Minimal Communication:** Husband only gives a certain amount of money, and wife manages it entirely without much discussion "Husband doesn't want to know about kitchen affairs, as long as he gives shopping money. How much is spent, for what, that's my business. Husband never asks." (HW-03)

This communication pattern is influenced by various factors, including education level, gender relation patterns in the family, and past experiences related to finances.

2. Negotiation and Financial Conflict Resolution

Conflicts related to finances are a reality faced by most informants. Strategies developed to manage these conflicts include:

- **Management Transparency:** Showing expense records to avoid misunderstandings "If my husband protests that money runs out quickly, I show him the shopping record. So he can see for himself what the money is for, he can't blame me arbitrarily." (HW-01)
- **Value Demonstration:** Showing the benefits of the expenditure made "When I wanted to buy a rice cooker, my husband objected. But I explained that with a rice cooker we could save gas and rice doesn't spoil easily. Finally he agreed because he saw the benefits." (HW-06)
- **Personal Fund Development:** Using own income for needs that are difficult to communicate with husband "For buying clothes or personal items, I use money from selling cakes. So I don't need to ask my husband and there is no debate." (HW-05)

These strategies reflect the adaptability and negotiation abilities of housewives in the context of limited financial autonomy.

The Role of Community in Transforming Financial Behavior

1. Informal Knowledge Transfer

Community becomes a space for informal knowledge transfer about financial practices. Some knowledge transfer mechanisms identified include:

- **Experience Sharing:** Exchange of stories about successful or failed financial management strategies "From Mrs. Ani I learned how to manage weekly shopping money. Her method is to divide the allowance for each day in small envelopes, so it's not wasteful at the beginning of the week." (HW-02)
- **Informal Mentoring:** More experienced members provide guidance to new members "The RT head often teaches how to record expenses

neatly. She has a special book and is very thorough in recording, so I follow her method." (HW-06)

- **Collective Learning:** Joint discussions about financial topics in community meetings "During ROSCAs or religious gatherings, sometimes we discuss ways to save, ways to find additional income, or experiences dealing with financial difficulties." (HW-08)

This knowledge transfer is contextual and practical, making it easier to adopt compared to formal financial education which is often too technical or abstract.

2. Formation of Collective Norms

The community also plays a role in shaping norms related to financial behavior considered "good" or "proper". Some identified norms include:

- **Caution in Borrowing:** Debt only for productive needs or emergencies, not for excessive consumption "In our community, debt to buy a TV or mobile phone is considered not good. But if debt for business capital or children's school fees, that is accepted." (HW-04)
- **Value of Saving:** Whatever the income, there must be something set aside "The women here remind each other to save, even a little. If it is known that someone gets a windfall but spends it all, they will surely be advised." (HW-01)
- **Financial Transparency:** Openness in terms of community finances "Every activity that uses cash, the usage is always reported in detail. So all members know what the money is used for." (HW-07)

These norms become social control mechanisms that encourage more responsible financial behavior.

3. Mediation of Access to External Resources

The community plays a role as a bridge for housewives to access resources and programs from outside, such as:

- **Economic Empowerment Programs:** Skills training and capital assistance from the government or NGOs "Last year there was cake-making training from the Cooperative Office. Community representatives were called, then those of us who attended the training taught other members." (HW-06)
- **Access to Formal Financial Institutions:** Information and assistance to access banking services "I used to be afraid to go to the bank, but after the Chairperson invited several members to open an account together, I became brave." (HW-02)
- **Government Programs:** Facilitation of access to social assistance and social protection programs "Information about PKH (Family Hope Program) assistance is disseminated through the community. Those who meet the requirements are helped to register." (HW-08)

This mediation role becomes important in the context of housewives' limited direct access to formal resources and information.

DISCUSSION

Financial Management Practices in the Perspective of Financial Literacy

The conceptualization of financial literacy among housewives in resource-constrained environments requires a paradigm shift from standardized measurement frameworks to what Johnson and Sharma (2018) term "contextual financial capability assessment." Their ethnographic research reveals that housewives demonstrate sophisticated financial competencies that conventional literacy measures fail to capture—including intricate mental accounting systems, temporal budgeting strategies spanning irregular income cycles, and complex risk assessment mechanisms for informal lending decisions. Particularly significant is what Kusnandar and Siregar (2020) identify as "resource orchestration capabilities," where Indonesian housewives coordinate multiple financial instruments simultaneously—using *arisan* for predictable expenses, informal loans for emergencies, and community-based savings for medium-term goals—showcasing financial portfolio management analogous to formal investment diversification strategies but operating through social rather than market mechanisms. The cognitive dimension of this adaptive financial intelligence manifests through what Berry and Thébaud (2019) describe as "mental budgeting heuristics"—cognitive shortcuts developed through experience that enable rapid financial decision-making under constraints without requiring formal computational skills. As Hidayati's (2022) research in Java demonstrates, these heuristics include proportional budgeting (allocating fixed percentages rather than fixed amounts during income fluctuations), temporal matching (aligning payment cycles with income patterns), and expenditure bundling (grouping purchases strategically to minimize transaction costs). What distinguishes this everyday financial literacy from formal financial education is its embedded and experiential nature—knowledge developed through practice rather than instruction, validated through outcomes rather than tests, and transmitted through demonstration rather than curricula. The challenge for effective financial education thus becomes one of translation rather than remediation—connecting these informal capabilities with formal financial concepts and institutions through what Darmawan and Ritonga (2021) characterize as "bridging pedagogies" that validate existing financial intelligence while extending its application to longer time horizons and more complex financial instruments.

Community as an Informal Financial Institution

The housewife community's financial ecosystem represents a profound and intricate alternative to formal financial institutions, revealing a sophisticated social infrastructure that transcends traditional economic boundaries. At the core of this system lies a multifaceted approach to financial management that simultaneously addresses intermediation, risk mitigation, and financial education through deeply interconnected social networks. The Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) and collaborative savings and loan systems emerge not as primitive financial tools, but as carefully constructed social technologies that leverage trust, reciprocity, and intimate community knowledge to create a robust financial mechanism. Unlike formal banking systems that rely on standardized credit scoring and impersonal risk assessment, these

community-driven approaches draw strength from personal relationships, shared social context, and collective responsibility. The insurance function manifests through intricate social funds and support systems that provide a dynamic, responsive safety net far more nuanced than traditional insurance products – adapting in real-time to individual and collective needs through a combination of financial resources and social capital. Moreover, the education function operates as a powerful knowledge transmission mechanism, where financial literacy is not delivered through formal instruction, but embedded in lived experiences, intergenerational interactions, and contextual learning. This approach to financial education goes beyond mere numerical literacy, encompassing complex social norms, negotiation skills, and economic survival strategies that are deeply rooted in the community's lived reality. Rutherford's concept of "shadow banking" finds profound validation in these community practices, demonstrating how marginalized or underserved populations develop sophisticated financial systems that are not merely survival mechanisms, but complex, adaptive economic strategies that challenge conventional understanding of financial inclusion. The implications are transformative: formal financial institutions are challenged to move beyond a replacement model to an integration approach, recognizing these community systems as legitimate, intelligent financial technologies that have evolved through generations of economic adaptation and social innovation. This research ultimately reveals that financial systems are not just about monetary transactions, but about complex social negotiations, trust networks, and collective economic empowerment that emerge from the lived experiences of communities traditionally overlooked by mainstream financial discourse.

Gender and Financial Autonomy

The intricate landscape of family financial management emerges as a nuanced terrain of power negotiation, where housewives navigate a delicate balance between operational autonomy and structural constraints, revealing a profoundly complex mechanism of gender dynamics that challenges simplistic narratives of financial disempowerment. Kabeer's concept of "bounded power" finds rich empirical validation in the research, illuminating how women exercise strategic agency within a carefully circumscribed economic domain, simultaneously empowered and constrained by deeply ingrained patriarchal structures. The operational control exercised by housewives over daily financial management represents a form of microeconomic resistance, where small-scale financial decisions become sites of subtle negotiation and potential transformation. These women develop sophisticated strategies of financial navigation – income diversification, personal fund development, and intricate social financial networks – that function as sophisticated tools of economic agency, extending far beyond mere survival mechanisms. The research uncovers a dynamic where women's financial autonomy is not a binary state of empowerment or disempowerment, but a complex, fluid negotiation of power that involves strategic calculations, social intelligence, and persistent reimagining of economic possibilities. Notably, while large financial decisions remain predominantly under male control, housewives construct elaborate alternative

economic spaces that allow for incremental expansion of their autonomy, creating micropockets of financial independence that challenge and slowly erode traditional patriarchal economic control. This approach to understanding economic empowerment moves beyond simplistic technical interventions, recognizing that true financial agency requires a fundamental transformation of gender relations, challenging not just economic capacity but the entire social architecture that determines who can make financial decisions and under what circumstances. The research ultimately reveals financial management as a profound site of gender negotiation, where every day economic practices become a form of subtle yet powerful resistance, transforming seemingly mundane financial interactions into complex acts of personal and collective agency that gradually reshape the broader landscape of gender relations within familial and economic structures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The financial management ecosystem of housewife communities emerges as a sophisticated adaptive mechanism, transcending mere survival strategies to represent a complex, intelligent system of economic navigation. Rooted in lived experience and collective wisdom, these practices constitute an intricate web of financial intelligence that operates through nuanced recording systems, strategic expenditure prioritization, and dynamic liquidity management that responds with remarkable agility to unstable income landscapes. Community becomes the crucible of financial knowledge, where informal networks transform individual survival tactics into collective economic resilience, mediating access to resources, forming contextual financial norms, and creating alternative institutional frameworks that not only complement but often strategically replace formal financial structures. The genius of this system lies in its ability to transform constraints into opportunities, generating financial practices that are simultaneously pragmatic and innovative, deeply personal yet fundamentally collective, revealing a form of economic agency that challenges conventional understandings of financial management and institutional engagement.

FURTHER STUDY

The practical recommendations from this study include several strategic steps to improve simple financial management among housewives. First, community-based financial education programs should be developed by involving community members from the planning to implementation stages to ensure relevance and sustainability. Second, rather than replacing them, formal financial systems should synergize with and strengthen existing informal systems, such as by developing financial products that integrate with ROSCA practices or local savings and loan mechanisms. Third, the use of appropriate technology is essential, including the development of structured financial record books or basic mobile applications that meet the needs and capacities of housewives. Finally, it is important to identify and build the capacity of community members who can serve as local financial coaches, supporting and enhancing the financial management skills of others within the community.

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