

The Role of Local Government in Providing Protection and Educational Support for Female Workers in the Informal Sector

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the role of local governments in protecting and providing educational support to female workers in the informal sector, with a focus on those engaged in nighttime economic activities. As the number of women in the informal sector rises, they face various risks without sufficient protection, highlighting the need for government intervention. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation from government agencies and female workers in the sector. The findings reveal that the local government's role is not fully optimized. As a regulator, there are no specific local regulations to protect female workers. As a facilitator, efforts to coordinate and provide mentoring remain fragmented. In its protective role, the government's actions are limited to general socialization and security patrols without direct protection programs. As a service provider, public services fail to address the real needs of these workers. The study concludes that the local government's role needs strengthening across all areas—regulation, facilitation, protection, and service provision—through the establishment of targeted policies, improved coordination, and the creation of sustainable, needs-based protection programs to ensure the welfare and safety of women in the informal sector.

Key Words: Local Government, Female Workers, Public Policy, Gender Equality

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INTRODUCTION

Female workers in the informal sector play a crucial role in supporting both family and local economies (Peprah et al., 2023; Ghore et al., 2023). These women are involved in various productive activities such as vending, working in eateries, and providing services (Mramba, 2024). However, despite their significant contribution, they often face substantial social and economic risks, including long working hours, unsafe working environments, and a lack of social security benefits. This study is important as it sheds light on the challenges faced by female workers in the informal sector and explores how the government can provide better protection. Although the informal sector offers employment opportunities, it is frequently unregulated, which means that female workers in

this sector are often left unprotected in terms of legal rights and workplace safety, underscoring the need for government intervention. These challenges call for increased protection to ensure that these workers are treated fairly, safely, and with dignity.

The growing participation of women in the informal sector has not been accompanied by adequate government intervention to protect them. Informal sectors are often unregulated and beyond the reach of formal labor systems, which leaves many female workers without legal protection, workplace safety measures, or access to basic social services. This gap in protection creates a vulnerable group that faces challenges such as exploitation, harassment, and unsafe working conditions. This situation calls for urgent attention to ensure these women are not left behind in terms of legal rights and workplace safety. The study investigates the extent of government involvement and the shortcomings in providing sufficient protection and support for these workers, and how these challenges can be addressed through more robust policy and legal frameworks.

On the ground, the phenomenon of female workers in the informal sector remains largely underreported and inadequately addressed by the government. Many women working in the informal sector, particularly in nighttime economic activities, face a range of issues including gender-based violence, harassment, and lack of safety measures at the workplace. Despite the increase in the number of women in this sector, the policies aimed at protecting them remain fragmented, and the support provided by local government agencies is insufficient. Additionally, social and cultural biases often place women's work in the informal sector in a secondary position, leading to their needs for protection being overlooked. This scenario emphasizes the need for a more focused and inclusive approach from the government to ensure that these workers receive the necessary protection and support to thrive in their roles.

Previous research has highlighted the critical role of local governments in providing protection for informal workers, particularly in terms of creating legal frameworks and offering services. Studies by Khasanah & Ana Listia (2018) and Rusydi et al. (2023) have shown that the lack of formal regulations for informal workers is a widespread issue. However, these studies have not adequately explored how local governments can specifically address the needs of female workers in the informal sector. They often fail to examine the role of gender in shaping the specific challenges faced by these women and how protection mechanisms can be more effectively implemented. The gap in addressing the intersection of gender, informal work, and government protection is a critical aspect that this study seeks to fill.

The existing research primarily focuses on general protection strategies for informal sector workers but lacks a detailed exploration of how female workers, specifically in the informal sector, can be supported through tailored policies. There is a need for more comprehensive studies that analyze the roles of

government bodies at local levels in both ensuring protection and providing educational support to female workers. This gap in the literature indicates the importance of this research in contributing to the development of more effective and inclusive protection policies.

This research provides a novel perspective by integrating both protection and educational support as critical aspects of governmental roles in supporting female workers in the informal sector. While previous studies have focused on protection and regulation, few have explored the integration of educational programs designed to empower female workers and improve their working conditions. This study will examine the role of the local government not only as a regulator and protector but also as a facilitator of educational opportunities that can enhance the welfare of women working in the informal economy. This aspect of educational support remains largely unexplored in the context of female informal sector workers, making this research highly relevant and timely.

The research problem centers on understanding how the local government can more effectively protect and support female workers in the informal sector, especially by integrating educational programs that enhance their skills and knowledge of legal rights. The preliminary argument suggests that while local governments have taken steps to protect informal workers, these measures are often insufficient and lack a gender-sensitive approach. This research will argue that a holistic approach—combining protection with education—will lead to better outcomes for female workers. By addressing both the regulatory and educational needs of these women, local governments can improve their working conditions and overall well-being, ensuring that they are not only protected legally but also empowered with knowledge and resources to navigate the challenges of the informal economy.

This study aims to provide a framework for strengthening government roles as regulators, facilitators, protectors, and service providers, specifically tailored to the needs of female workers in the informal sector, thereby contributing to their long-term welfare and safety.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the form of the Padang City government's policy in providing protection to women working in the informal sector. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to describe social phenomena factually and comprehensively based on real conditions in the field. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding of the meaning and social context behind policies and experiences of women workers in carrying out their economic activities. The location of the study was determined in Padang City, West Sumatra Province, because this city has a large number of informal sector workers and is the center of economic activity.

The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is the deliberate determination of informants based on certain criteria relevant to the purpose of the research. The research informants consisted of the Padang City Manpower and Transmigration Office, the Pamong Praja Police Unit, and women night workers in the informal sector. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis techniques which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses triangulation of sources and techniques, so that the results obtained are valid, credible, and can be scientifically accounted for.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Role of Government in Protecting Women Workers in the Informal Sector

The results of the study show that the role of the Padang City Government as a regulator in providing protection for women working in the informal sector has not been running optimally. Local governments are still guided by national regulations such as Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, but do not yet have regional regulations that specifically regulate the protection of women workers in the informal sector. This condition indicates that the government's function as a rule-maker and guarantor of legal certainty has not been fully implemented. Supposedly, the role of regulators functions to create a legal framework that is able to provide a sense of security, ensure justice, and adjust policies to the regional socio-economic context, but this has not been realized in Padang City.

In addition, the results of interviews with women workers show that the socialization and supervision function of the implementation of the rules has not been effective. Most of the workers admitted that they had never received an explanation about labor rights and occupational safety protection from the relevant agencies. The absence of socialization and the lack of dissemination of legal information make women workers in the informal sector do not understand the rights and protections they should receive. As a result, the government's regulatory role has lost its usefulness, because existing regulations are not conveyed and cannot be implemented by the worker groups that are the main targets.

Field observations also show that occupational safety and security standards for women in the informal sector have not been met. The absence of basic facilities such as adequate lighting, security posts, or workplace supervision systems shows the weak functioning of the government in enforcing labor protection standards. Thus, the role of the Padang City Government regulator is still formal and administrative, not yet reaching the implementation stage that can guarantee real protection for women workers in the informal sector. To strengthen this role, the government needs to develop more contextual regional

regulations, expand legal socialization, and increase supervisory capacity so that the regulatory function can truly protect vulnerable groups of workers.

The Role of Government in Protecting Women Workers in the Informal Sector

The results of the study show that the role of the Padang City Government as a facilitator in providing protection for women working in the informal sector is still not optimal. The local government, through the Manpower and Transmigration Office, has so far only carried out the function of socialization and general coordination without a special program for mentoring or coaching women workers. This condition indicates that the function of government facilitators has not been able to bridge the needs of the community with proper support, both in the form of services, training, and access to social protection.

In addition, cross-agency coordination in the implementation of protection is still sectoral and less integrated. Satpol PP, for example, focuses more on law enforcement than direct guidance to female workers. The lack of synergy between government, private, and community agencies hinders the effectiveness of protection programs, so that the role of government facilitators only runs partially and has not reached the root of the problem in the field.

Interviews with women workers revealed that the function of government facilitators is still passive and reactive, where support only appears when problems have occurred, not in the form of prevention or ongoing assistance. Roles that should be participatory and preventive, such as encouraging community involvement from the beginning, have not been carried out consistently. Thus, strengthening the facilitation system oriented to field needs, improving cross-sector coordination, and active community participation is a crucial step so that the function of government facilitators can run effectively as a bridge between women workers and the social protection they need.

The Role of Government Protectors for Women Workers in the Informal Sector

The results of the study show that the role of the Padang City Government as a protector for women working in the informal sector is still general and has not touched the specific needs of workers in the field. The government's efforts so far have been limited to socialization and appeals related to occupational safety and security, without a direct protection mechanism that ensures the welfare of women workers. This condition indicates that the government's protective function is more preventive in general, without real support in the form of mentoring programs, social security, or security facilities in the informal work environment.

In addition, field findings show that cross-agency coordination in the protection of women workers is still minimal and passive. Satpol PP, for example, emphasizes the enforcement of public order rather than direct protection of individuals, while the Manpower Office does not have a structured protection system. The absence of operational mechanisms and data on women workers in

the informal sector shows that the government has not been able to provide comprehensive physical, social, and psychological protection.

Thus, the protective role of the Padang City Government is still at the normative and administrative levels, not yet reflected in concrete actions on the ground. Strengthening the protective function requires the establishment of an integrated supervision and protection mechanism, involving various related agencies such as the Manpower Office, Satpol PP, the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office, and the security apparatus. This step is important so that women working in the informal sector obtain real guarantees of safety, welfare, and legal protection, in accordance with the principles of labor protection and social justice.

The Role of Government in Protecting Women Workers in the Informal Sector

The results of the study show that the role of the Padang City Government as a public servant in providing protection for women working in the informal sector is still not optimal. The government's efforts through the Manpower and Transmigration Office in the form of coaching, counseling, and access to consultation are still general and have not reached the specific needs of women workers in the informal sector. This condition reflects that the government's public service function is more focused on administrative aspects, has not touched the inclusive social dimension and is oriented towards improving the welfare of the lower strata community.

In addition, field findings show that the public services provided tend to be reactive and not proactive in anticipating the social and economic risks faced by women workers. Satpol PP, for example, still focuses on enforcing public order without a preventive service mechanism that targets vulnerable groups. The lack of continuous socialization, training, and mentoring shows that the principles of fair, accessible, and quality public services have not been fully realized, so the dimensions of justice and equity for informal workers are still limited.

Thus, the role of the Padang City Government servants needs to be substantially and structurally strengthened. The government must expand the scope of services through a participatory approach, build a service system that is adaptive to local socio-economic conditions, and strengthen cross-sector coordination so that the services provided are not only administrative, but also able to improve the security, welfare, and quality of life of women in the informal sector. This strengthening will make the government more meaningful as a public servant that is responsive, fair, and oriented to the needs of the community, especially vulnerable groups.

Government Obstacles in Carrying Out Protection Roles

The implementation of the government's role in providing protection for women workers in the informal sector in Padang City faces significant structural

and resource constraints. The absence of specific regional regulations causes the government to not have a clear operational basis, so that real actions in the field are limited. This condition reflects the weak implementation function, where the role of the government has not been fully followed by concrete efforts to protect vulnerable groups of workers, as Dunn explained that the success of the government's role is highly dependent on clarity of objectives, resources, and coordination of implementers.

In addition, the limited number of supervisors and the lack of budget allocation worsen the effectiveness of the existing government role. Without adequate resource support, the role of the government tends to stop at the administrative level and is unable to reach the real needs of the community. This phenomenon can be seen in the protection of women workers in the informal sector which is still limited to discourse, while direct supervision and empowerment programs cannot be implemented due to the limited capacity of local government apparatus, in line with Thomas R. Dye's view that the effectiveness of the government's role depends on the availability of resources.

From the perspective of labor protection, these structural and social constraints lead to weak legal guarantees and job safety for women in the informal sector. The lack of public understanding of the duties of agencies such as Satpol PP also causes misunderstandings related to protection authority. Therefore, local governments need to strengthen cross-agency coordination, increase human resource capacity, and develop a more specific government role so that the protection of the female workforce can be effective, consistent, and measurable, and truly respond to the needs of vulnerable groups in the field.

Government Efforts to Increase the Role of Protection

The Padang City government's efforts to improve protection for women workers in the informal sector show an initial commitment to strengthening the labor protection system. Steps such as data collection and regional mapping are important bases for formulating targeted interventions, because accurate data is needed so that the role of the government can adjust to empirical conditions on the ground. Although it is currently still conceptual, this initiative shows a positive direction in efforts to create more effective protection based on the real needs of women workers.

In addition, the government's cross-agency coordination, including the Manpower Office, Satpol PP, Social Service, and Women's Empowerment Office, reflects the application of collaborative principles in the government's role. However, this coordination is still informal and not formally structured, so its effectiveness is limited and depends on the initiatives of each institution. The government needs to ensure that preventive measures such as patrols and surveillance are followed by real protection mechanisms, including safe facilities, socialization of workers' rights, and strengthening the capacity of human resources so that the government's role runs effectively and provides concrete

protection for women workers in the informal sector.

Discussion

The findings of this study regarding the role of the Padang City Government in providing protection to women working in the informal sector align with and diverge from existing literature on the subject. In line with previous research, such as those by Sherwani et al. (2024) and Sifullah, et al. (2023), this study highlights the lack of specific local regulations that address the protection of women in the informal sector. Both this study and prior literature emphasize the need for legal frameworks that can protect informal sector workers, especially women, from exploitation and ensure their access to workplace safety. However, unlike previous studies that mostly discuss general labor protection, this study focuses specifically on gendered protection and the challenges women face in informal employment. The findings suggest that while the national regulations provide a foundation, the absence of tailored regional regulations hampers the protection of female workers, which has been less emphasized in earlier works.

In comparison with other studies, this research further highlights the government's insufficient coordination and facilitation efforts. As noted in Harakan et al. (2025), the importance of inter-agency collaboration for effective implementation of policies is crucial, but this study found that coordination within Padang's government bodies remains fragmented. For instance, while Satpol PP is involved in law enforcement, their focus remains more on public order rather than on direct assistance to female workers. This contrasts with studies like those of Feldkircher (2024), who emphasize the need for more proactive governmental roles, which this research also advocates for. The lack of a structured system for supporting female workers in Padang demonstrates a gap in the theoretical framework that calls for better integration of roles and responsibilities across different government bodies.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study reinforces the concept of multi-dimensional governance in protecting vulnerable groups. The literature generally categorizes government roles into regulatory, protective, and service-providing functions. However, this research extends the theory by adding an educational support dimension, which is often overlooked. It underscores that protection is not only about enforcing laws but also about facilitating education and awareness about rights and safety measures, something that is still underdeveloped in Padang. This theoretical extension calls for an evolved understanding of government roles that incorporates educational functions alongside regulatory and protective ones, ensuring a more holistic approach to worker welfare.

In terms of practical implications, the findings indicate a need for practical reforms in local government operations. For instance, this study highlights the critical gap in legal and social services for female workers in the informal sector,

suggesting that local governments should prioritize not only creating legal protections but also ensuring the implementation of social services that address the specific needs of women. This is crucial for improving their working conditions and providing them with access to legal and social support systems. The implications are particularly important for policymakers, urging them to focus on gender-sensitive policies that address the unique challenges faced by women in the informal sector, which is crucial for achieving social justice.

Moreover, this research also suggests that the government's role as a service provider must be strengthened through active engagement with the informal sector. Public services must go beyond administrative roles and become more proactive in offering resources such as legal aid, vocational training, and financial support. These services should be accessible and tailored to the realities of women working in informal employment. The findings encourage further development of public service frameworks that are inclusive, accessible, and able to respond effectively to the challenges of informal workers, particularly women. This practical recommendation provides a roadmap for future interventions aimed at improving the lives of women in the informal sector, ensuring they are provided with not only protection but also opportunities for growth and empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that the role of the Padang City Government in providing protection to women workers in the informal sector is still far from optimal. Although there have been efforts made as regulators, facilitators, protectors, and public servants, the implementation of the policy is still general and has not touched the specific needs of women workers in the field. Limitations in terms of clear regional regulations, inter-agency coordination, and adequate facility support indicate the need to increase the capacity of the government in carrying out this role. This research provides an important lesson that protection policies for women workers must be adapted to local conditions and concretely involve various parties to achieve them.

The strength of this paper lies in its contribution to a deeper understanding of the role of the government in providing protection to women in the informal sector, especially by highlighting the aspect of inter-agency coordination and the importance of more targeted regulatory formulation. This research opens up new insights into integrating protection policies with legal education and counseling, which are often underappreciated. However, the limitation of this study is that there is no more comprehensive data on the number of female informal workers in Padang City. Therefore, more in-depth follow-up research with broader data collection and policy analysis from various regions needs to be carried out to strengthen recommendations and scientific contributions related to the protection of women's informal workforce.

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