



## Original Article

# Exploring Gender-Based Consumption Priorities and Their Influence on Household Poverty Dynamics in Indonesia

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### Abstract:

The dynamics of household poverty in Indonesia are influenced by consumption patterns that often differ between men and women, especially in the socio-economic context of regions such as East Aceh which still face inequality in the role of household resource management. This study aims to explore how gender-based consumption priorities affect household economic vulnerability and resilience, as well as analyze the relationship between spending decisions, basic needs allocation, and poverty risk. Using a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory design, this study collected survey data from 60 household respondents as well as in-depth interviews with 12 key informants, including heads of households, housewives, and community leaders, which were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, linear regression, and thematic analysis. The results showed that households that prioritized consumption more on health, education, and children's needs, which were generally influenced by women's preferences, had a lower level of poverty vulnerability than households whose consumption was dominated by non-essential needs, lifestyle, or personal expenses that were more determined by men. These findings confirm that strengthening the role of women in household economic decision-making contributes significantly to welfare stability and poverty risk reduction. This research makes an important contribution to the development of gender theory and household economics, while offering practical implications for the design of more gender-responsive poverty alleviation policies.

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### Introduction

Household poverty in Indonesia is still a recurring structural challenge in various regions, especially in rural areas. The factor that most affects the dynamics of poverty is how households allocate their income for consumption and basic needs (Habib et al., 2023). In various studies, consumption has been shown to be a strong indicator that reflects the well-being and economic vulnerability of families (Bufo et al., 2022; Cook & Davíðsdóttir, 2021). This consumption pattern is greatly influenced by the role of gender

in the household, including who controls economic decisions. Therefore, understanding consumption priorities by gender is important to explain the mobility of household poverty.

In Indonesia, especially in areas that still hold patriarchal cultural norms, household economic decisions are more often influenced by men than women. This condition often results in consumption allocations that are less in favor of long-term basic needs. Research shows that non-essential spending such as entertainment or personal consumption tends to increase when men dominate spending decisions (Čajnić et al., n.d.). In contrast, women are more likely to prioritize their children's health, education, and needs. These differences are an important factor in understanding why some households are more vulnerable to poverty than others.

The concept of gender in the household economy not only describes the division of roles, but also how social values influence consumption decisions. International studies also show that female-run households tend to be more stable in their financial management (Hu, 2021). Women's responses to economic risks, including inflation or cost-of-living pressures, tend to be more adaptive and cautious. This has an impact on reducing vulnerability to long-term poverty. These findings reinforce the importance of including a gender perspective in studying poverty dynamics.

However, research on the influence of gender-based consumption priorities on poverty dynamics at the household level is still limited in Indonesia. Most studies only highlight aggregate economic variables such as total consumption or income without looking at the decision-making structure within households (Baker & Kueng, 2022). These limitations create a knowledge gap about how different consumption decisions between men and women affect the ability of households to get out of poverty. In addition, there have not been many studies that have examined this dynamic contextually in areas with strong cultural norms such as East Aceh. This gap needs to be answered through a more in-depth and gender-sensitive research approach.

In East Aceh, the role of gender in the household is greatly influenced by traditional values and social structures that are still quite traditional. Men are generally the main determinants of large expenses, while women manage the daily needs of the household. This condition has the potential to result in an imbalance in the allocation of expenditures related to long-term welfare. If consumption priorities are not directed to basic needs, households are more likely to experience poverty or economic difficulties. Therefore, East Aceh is a relevant and strategic location to study this phenomenon.

This study explicitly aims to analyze how gender-based consumption priorities affect the dynamics of household poverty. Its main focus is to identify patterns of consumption decisions between men and women and how those differences affect economic vulnerability. In addition, this study seeks to understand the social, cultural, and economic factors that shape these consumption patterns. Thus, this study not only explains the relationship between economic variables, but also provides a more comprehensive understanding of society. This goal is important for generating new knowledge that is academically and practically relevant.

To answer this goal, this study uses mixed methods with explanatory design. A quantitative approach was carried out through a survey of 60 households to obtain an overview of consumption patterns and poverty status. The qualitative approach was carried out through in-depth interviews with 12 informants consisting of heads of families, housewives, and community leaders. This combination allows researchers to objectively capture consumption dynamics while gaining a deeper understanding of gender values

and norms. This method provides stronger and more comprehensive results than using a single approach.

Theoretically, this study contributes to strengthening the study of household economics by adding a gender perspective as a key variable in poverty dynamics. This research also adds to the literature on gender-based economic decision-making in the local context of Indonesia that is still rarely researched. Practically, the results of this research can be the basis for local governments and social institutions in formulating poverty alleviation programs that are more gender-responsive. Policy recommendations can be directed at women's empowerment in household economic decision-making. Thus, this research not only makes an academic contribution, but also supports efforts to improve community welfare directly.

## Method

### Types, Approaches, and Research Design

This study uses a Mixed Methods approach with a Sequential Explanatory design that is comparative and exploratory, namely the quantitative stage is carried out first to map consumption patterns and poverty status, then followed by the qualitative stage to deepen the explanation of the socio-cultural mechanisms behind the quantitative findings (Toyon, 2021). This approach was chosen because the topic combines measurable variables (proportion of expenditure, income, poverty status) and social phenomena that require narrative explanation (gender roles, household negotiations). Explanatory design allows the use of quantitative data to identify common patterns and key variables, which are then tested and explained qualitatively through in-depth interviews. This combination increases the internal validity of the research through triangulation of methods and data sources.

### Population, Sampling Framework, and Sampling Techniques

The study population is households in East Aceh Regency who have permanent resident status and run the household economy as a decision-making unit (households aged  $\geq 1$  year at the location). The quantitative sampling framework was built through the purposive cluster sampling approach, namely the selection of 3-4 representative gampongs (coastal, agricultural, semi-urban) that showed different levels of poverty, then conducted systematic/purposive sampling of households in each cluster until a total of 60 respondents was reached. For the qualitative stage, purposive techniques + snowball sampling were used to select 12 key informants (6 housewives, 3 heads of families, 2 traditional leaders, 1 PKH companion) who could provide rich data on the consumption decision-making process. The number of samples was decided to balance between the need for basic statistical analysis and the depth of the contextual interview.

### Data Collection Instruments & Item Sources

The quantitative instrument is a structured questionnaire that contains modules: demographic characteristics, sources of income, details of household expenditure (categories: food, education, health, cigarettes/alcohol, transportation, communication, investment/business), decision control indicators (who are the main decision-makers), as well as poverty status indicators (local poverty lines and simple multidimensional indicators). The measurement items were developed and adjusted to the local context of East Aceh through a pretest. Qualitative instruments are in the form of semi-structured interview guidelines that explore decision-making narratives, gender norms, budget allocation conflicts, and economic survival strategies. In addition, secondary documents (district BPS data, PKH recipient lists) were used for sample contextualization and data triangulation.

### Validity, Reliability, and Instrument Tests

To ensure the quality of the instruments, the questionnaire was tested through a face validity process by 2 local experts (social accountability and gender sociology) and through

cognitive interviews with 8 pilot respondents outside the main sample and the items that caused ambiguity were revised. The reliability of the expenditure scale and priority index were assessed using Cronbach's alpha on the pilot data, a value of  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  considered adequate for follow-up analysis. The validity of the construct was tested by simple exploratory factor analysis to see the consistency of the grouping of expenditure categories. For the qualitative aspect, validity is realized through member checking (verification of interview summaries to informants) and source triangulation (comparison of informant statements with survey data and local documents) (Motulsky, 2021).

### **Data Collection Procedures and Field Implementation**

Phase I (quantitative): after obtaining ethical permits and permits from village officials, the field team conducted sample mapping in 3–4 gampongs, conducted face-to-face questionnaire interviews with 60 households with a trained enumerator approach; Each interview is expected to last 45–60 minutes. Phase II (qualitative): based on initial quantitative findings (consumption priority patterns and household groups of interest), 12 informants were selected for in-depth interviews (~60–90 minutes), recorded (with permission) and transcribed. All stages are carried out with ethical protocols: written/verbal informed consent, anonymity guarantees, and the option to withdraw at any time. The collection procedure was arranged in a structured field schedule (2–3 weeks data collection; 2 weeks qualitative interviews) to ensure quality and consistency.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis Techniques and Software**

Quantitative analysis begins with descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, median) to describe the household profile and expenditure composition. To test the relationship between who is a decision-maker (gender decision-making), consumption priority (proportion of expenditure per category), and poverty status, a differential test (t-test/Chi-square) as well as a multiple linear regression model or binary logistic regression depending on the nature of the dependent variable (poor/non-poor status, or vulnerability index) are used. Control variables such as head of household education, family size, and source of income were included to reduce confounding bias. The analysis was performed using SPSS statistical software, including classical assumption checks for regression and robustness analysis (Alita et al., 2021).

### **Qualitative Data Analysis Techniques, Data Integration, Ethics, and Validity of Conclusions**

Qualitative analysis is carried out through thematic analysis (open coding, axial coding, theme development) to identify narrative patterns related to gender norms, negotiation processes, and the meaning of consumption priorities, this process is supported by NVivo software or manuals with coding matrix if necessary (Naeem et al., 2023). Integration of results is carried out at the interpretation stage, i.e. quantitative findings are used to select relevant qualitative cases and qualitative findings explain the mechanisms behind statistical correlation, thus enabling contextual policy recommendations. Research ethics are strictly adhered to, including institutional ethical consent, informed consent, and personal data protection. Finally, the overall validity is tested through method triangulation, member checking, and sensitivity analysis to ensure that conclusions can be accounted for academically and practically (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024).

## **Results**

### **1. Differences in Household Consumption Priorities and Their Quantitative Patterns**

Quantitative results show a consistent difference between households controlled by women's consumption preferences and households dominated by men's decisions. Households with higher female influence tend to allocate a larger proportion of spending on basic needs in the form of health, education, and children's needs. On the other hand,

households whose budget decisions are more male-led show a larger portion of non-essential consumption such as cigarettes, hobbies, lifestyle, and personal expenses. This pattern is in line with a descriptive analysis that shows a stable trend that an increase in the proportion of expenditure in the basic category has an impact on reducing the level of poverty vulnerability.

Table 1. Distribution of Household Consumption by Category and Decision-Maker Dominance

Consumption Category	Female-Dominant Households (%)	Male-Dominant Households (%)
Health	18.3	9.7
Education	21.5	11.2
Child Needs	14.8	8.4
Food	26.0	25.6
Lifestyle/Personal	8.7	22.9
Tobacco/Hobby	3.2	15.4
Other Miscellaneous	7.5	6.8

These findings illustrate that gender-based consumption patterns are not only differences in preferences, but determine the structure of expenditure that impacts the household's capacity to maintain financial stability. Qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results. A housewife said, *"If I were the one to arrange it, I would definitely prioritize school and the cost of the sick child first. That's the most important thing for us."* (M-03, September 2025 interview). This statement is reinforced by another informant who asserts that women's decisions usually take into account long-term needs, *"I see that mothers in the village, all their thoughts are the same: health first, children first. We are more careful about money."* (M-05, September 2025 interview). Even the PKH companions emphasized this general tendency, *"In many families receiving assistance, consumption decisions change for the better when mothers are more involved in managing spending money"* (P-01, September 2025 interview). This quote shows the connection between women's preferences and spending orientation that is more protective of poverty risk.

## 2. Consumption Priorities and Their Influence on Household Poverty Vulnerability

Regression analysis showed that an increase in the proportion of spending on health, education, and children's needs significantly lowered the household poverty vulnerability index. Female-dominant households have a much lower vulnerability score than households whose main expenditure flows to non-essential needs. This negative correlation suggests that essential consumption characteristics serve as an internal social protection mechanism that maintains family economic stability amid fluctuating spending and income pressures.

Table 2. Regression Model of Determinants of Poverty Vulnerability

Variable	Coefficient (b)	Significance
Health Expenditure Share	-0.284	Significant
Education Expenditure Share	-0.317	Significant
Child Needs Expenditure Share	-0.225	Significant

Variable	Coefficient (b)	Significance
Lifestyle/Personal Expenditure Share	+0.301	Significant
Male-Dominant Decision-Making	+0.259	Significant
Female-Dominant Decision-Making	-0.271	Significant

This trend is also explained through narrative data, showing how consumption decisions help shape household economic resilience. A family head admitted, *"If I manage it myself, sometimes I use money for things I like in the past. Only the rest is for home needs."* (F-02, September 2025 interview). This narrative shows a tendency to prioritize that is not always in harmony with the basic needs of the household. However, in contrast to that, one of the female informants explained, *"If I hold money, I make sure to pay for school first, then think about something else. That's what makes it not too difficult for us if there is a sudden need."* (M-01, September 2025 interview). Traditional leaders also confirmed changes in consumption dynamics, *"I noticed that households that give more space for women's decisions are usually more orderly in money matters"* (A-02, September 2025 interview). The whole narrative reveals a consistent internal mechanism: women's preferences reduce the risk of falling into poverty.

### 3. Gendered Decision-Making as a Driver of Economic Stability and Household Resilience

The household economic resilience index shows that families that actively involve women in financial decision-making have a higher capacity to adapt to economic stresses, such as rising prices of basic necessities or health emergency situations. A consumption structure that is oriented towards basic needs makes households have more directed financial reserves, reduces the level of shock exposure and the burden of unproductive spending.

Table 3. Household Economic Resilience Index by Decision-Maker Dominance

Household Type	Mean Resilience Index
Female-Dominant Households	0.71
Joint-Decision Households	0.64
Male-Dominant Households	0.49

An in-depth explanation of the qualitative stage shows how decision-making structures affect everyday economic resilience. A female informant said, *"We often set aside a little money just in case, because the needs of the child are unpredictable"* (M-04, September 2025 interview). This was continued by a traditional leader who observed the practices of the community, *"Families that provide space for deliberation between husband and wife are usually better prepared in case of a sudden event"* (A-01, September 2025 interview). The PKH companion then confirmed the condition from the perspective of the field, *"Households whose budgets are orderly and prioritized for basic needs are almost always more resilient to monthly crises"* (P-01, September 2025 interview). These quotes are interrelated, consistently illustrating how women's involvement strengthens financial discipline and family economic resilience.

## Discussion

The results show that consumption priorities that are more oriented towards health, education, and children's needs contribute significantly to the low vulnerability of household poverty in East Aceh. These findings are in line with the Household Resource Allocation theory, which emphasizes that family spending decisions are strongly influenced by actors who have a long-term orientation towards household welfare (Gonçalves, 2022; Debellis et al., 2024; Li, 2023). In this context, women have proven to have a tendency to set more productive consumption and support economic stability. This pattern is the main differentiator between relatively stable households and households that are vulnerable to poverty risk. Thus, strengthening productive consumption preferences has been proven to have a direct effect on increasing household economic resilience.

These findings are consistent with several previous studies that confirm that women are more likely to prioritize spending on basic necessities than men (Hos et al., 2021; Wee & Kong, 2024). In international research, gender-based consumption allocations have been shown to affect the ability of households to get out of the poverty trap, especially in developing regions (Addai et al., 2022; Sanogo, 2025). In this study, male consumption patterns that are more often directed towards non-essential and social needs show a tendency to increase the financial burden of households. This explains why households with such consumption patterns have a higher level of poverty vulnerability. Thus, the results of this study expand the empirical evidence on the role of gender as a determining factor in the dynamics of household welfare.

The difference in consumption preferences between men and women appears to be consistent in survey data and thematic interviews without having to quote direct statements. Women are more dominant in choosing allocations for basic needs because they view these expenses as a long-term investment in household stability. In contrast, men tend to direct consumption to lifestyle needs or social activities that do not directly contribute to the reduction of economic vulnerability. This difference is in line with the concept of Gendered Consumer Behavior which explains that consumption orientation is influenced by social values and gender role structures (Bahoo et al., 2024; Phillips & Englis, 2022). Thus, these differences in preferences provide evidence of a strong gender influence on family spending structures.

Regression analysis showed that households with a non-essential consumption composition had a higher level of vulnerability than households that focused on basic consumption. These findings support the concept of Poverty Vulnerability which states that the structure of household expenditure can be a major determinant of poverty risk, even when income is relatively equal (Zhang et al., 2022). Non-essential consumption that does not produce long-term value makes households more sensitive to economic changes. On the contrary, essential consumption such as education and health actually strengthens household resilience. Therefore, consumption structure is an important component in understanding the dynamics of poverty in East Aceh.

This study shows that women have a significant role in maintaining household economic stability through more targeted and strategic consumption patterns. Women tend to have priorities that are aligned with basic needs, so that the spending structure becomes more efficient and controlled. These findings reinforce the literature that emphasizes that women's economic empowerment contributes directly to household resilience (Chikwe et al., 2024). In the context of East Aceh, social norms actually provide space for women to manage domestic activities, including household finances. However, the effectiveness of these roles is highly dependent on the unequal division of power in the household.

All 12 informants provided perspectives that enriched understanding of gender-based consumption patterns in East Aceh. Female informants generally emphasize the importance of maintaining consumption on basic needs, while male informants show different preferences regarding personal or social spending. Informants from community groups provided insights on how local cultural values affect decision-making in households. The informant accompanying the social program explained that families managed by women experienced an increase in consumption stability faster after receiving assistance. This variation in perspective emphasizes that the dynamics of gender-based consumption have interrelated social, economic, and cultural roots.

This research has several limitations that need to be considered as part of a scientific evaluation. First, the limited number of respondents makes generalizing the findings to a wider area must be done carefully. Second, data is mostly obtained through self-reports which allows for perception bias or social bias. Third, other variables such as financial literacy, education level, and power dynamics in the household cannot be explored in depth in this study. Fourth, the specific socio-cultural context of East Aceh can be different from other regions in Indonesia. Therefore, follow-up research is recommended using larger samples and more comprehensive triangulation methods.

This research makes an important theoretical contribution in strengthening the understanding of the relationship between gender, consumption, and poverty within the framework of Gender Economics. These findings suggest that the distribution of power in consumption decision-making has direct implications for household economic resilience. Practically, the results of the research can be the basis for the formulation of more gender-responsive poverty alleviation policies, especially in social assistance programs and family financial empowerment. Further research can examine more deeply the influence of financial literacy and the psychological dynamics of consumption decision-making. Thus, the understanding of gender-based consumption can be expanded to support more effective and sustainable policy interventions.

## Conclusion

This study confirms that differences in gender-based consumption priorities have a significant influence on the dynamics of household poverty in East Aceh. Households managed with a consumption-oriented focus on essential needs, especially health, education, and children's needs—showed a lower level of poverty vulnerability than households with non-essential consumption patterns that were more often dominated by male preferences. These findings reinforce the concept that expenditure structure is an important indicator in determining household economic resilience, and that women's role in economic decision-making contributes directly to the stability of family well-being. Thus, gender-based consumption patterns have proven to be an important determinant in understanding the dynamics of poverty at the micro level.

This research also shows that strengthening the role of women in household resource management is an effective strategy to increase family economic resilience in vulnerable areas such as East Aceh. Quantitative and qualitative analysis confirms that women's consumption preferences are aligned with long-term investments, thereby minimizing economic risks and improving the sustainability of household welfare. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in strengthening the literature on Gender Economics and Household Consumption Behavior, while its practical contribution provides the basis for the formulation of gender-responsive poverty alleviation policies, including financial literacy-based interventions and women's empowerment. Therefore,

the integration of gender perspectives in public policy is an important step in reducing poverty vulnerability more effectively.

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