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Empowering the Creative Economy as a Survival Strategy for Single Mothers After Unregistered Divorce in Aceh

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Abstract

Unregistered (siri) divorce in Aceh produces significant socio-legal and economic vulnerabilities for single mothers due to the absence of formal legal recognition and limited access to state resources. While the creative economy is often promoted as an inclusive empowerment strategy, single mothers affected by unregistered divorce continue to face severe constraints in accessing capital, institutional support, and targeted policies. Using a qualitative approach guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), this study examines how single mothers mobilize livelihood assets to sustain economic resilience amid legal invisibility. Based on interviews with single mothers, creative economy actors, and government officials in Aceh, the findings demonstrate that creative economic engagement enhances economic independence and social capital, despite persistent barriers to financial and institutional support. This study underscores the need for targeted legal and policy interventions to ensure business sustainability and strengthen the socio-legal position of single mothers in Aceh.

Keywords: Single Mothers, Siri Divorce, Economic Resilience, Aceh.

Abstrak

Perceraian siri di Aceh menyebabkan banyak ibu tunggal menghadapi kerentanan sosial dan ekonomi akibat kurangnya pengakuan hukum dan akses terhadap sumber daya. Idealnya, pemberdayaan ekonomi kreatif dapat menjadi solusi strategis, namun dalam praktiknya, akses modal, dukungan kelembagaan, dan kebijakan khusus untuk ibu tunggal pasca perceraian siri masih sangat terbatas. Penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan tersebut dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan kerangka Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) untuk menganalisis bagaimana ibu tunggal memanfaatkan modal penghidupan dalam mempertahankan ketahanan ekonomi mereka. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan ibu tunggal, pelaku ekonomi kreatif, serta pejabat dinas terkait di Aceh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemberdayaan ekonomi kreatif meningkatkan kemandirian ekonomi dan modal sosial ibu tunggal, meskipun masih terdapat kendala signifikan dalam akses modal finansial dan dukungan kelembagaan. Studi ini menegaskan perlunya intervensi kebijakan yang lebih terarah untuk mendukung keberlanjutan usaha dan penguatan posisi sosial ibu tunggal di Aceh.

Kata Kunci: Ibu Tunggal, Perceraian Siri, Ketahanan Ekonomi, Aceh.

Introduction

Unregistered (siri) divorce remains a persistent socio-legal phenomenon in Indonesia that generates structural vulnerabilities, particularly for women. Although religiously valid, unregistered divorce is not recognized within the state legal system, resulting in uncertainty regarding women's civil status and the loss of access to fundamental rights such as maintenance, inheritance, child identity documentation, and social protection. This condition places women, especially single mothers, in a position of legal marginalization that directly intersects with economic vulnerability. Previous legal studies have consistently demonstrated that women involved in unregistered marriages and divorces experience exclusion from formal legal protection due to the absence of state recognition (Asman, 2024). Consequently, unregistered divorce does not merely represent a private religious practice but constitutes a juridical problem that weakens women's legal subjectivity and economic security.

Aceh presents a distinctive legal context due to its special autonomy and the formal incorporation of Islamic law within the state legal system. While religious norms strongly legitimize marriage and divorce practices, access to rights and protection remains dependent on administrative recognition by the state. This legal dualism produces a paradox: women who are socially acknowledged as divorced remain administratively invisible. In socio-legal terms, this condition constitutes legal invisibility—where individuals are socially present yet administratively unrecognized, resulting in systematic exclusion from rights and resources. As a result, single mothers following an unregistered divorce in Aceh face compounded vulnerability. Their legal invisibility restricts access to

employment, banking services, business registration, and government assistance programs.

Within this context of legal invisibility, national creative economy policies promote micro- and small-scale enterprises as inclusive pathways for women's economic empowerment, emphasizing flexibility, home-based production, and accessibility. Ideally, the creative economy is expected to function as a strategic solution for women facing economic marginalization (Yan & Liu, 2023). However, empirical reality reveals a different condition. Single mothers without legal marital documentation are administratively classified as "never married," which prevents them from accessing microcredit schemes, business licensing, and state-sponsored training programs. In this context, participation in the creative economy does not emerge from policy-driven empowerment, but rather as an adaptive survival strategy developed outside formal institutional frameworks. Legal invisibility is thus transformed into economic exclusion. Although women in Indonesia have business rights, contracts, and bank account ownership formally recognized by state law, they still face significant barriers to accessing credit and adequate affirmative action policies (Hidayah, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study examines how single mothers in Aceh, following an unregistered divorce, mobilize creative economic activities as survival strategies under conditions of legal and economic exclusion. Using a qualitative approach and guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), this research examines how women mobilize livelihood assets—human, social, financial, physical, and natural capital—to sustain their economic resilience. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) identify the forms of creative economic activities undertaken by single mothers after an unregistered divorce; (2) analyze the livelihood assets utilized in sustaining these activities; and (3) examine the legal and institutional constraints shaping their economic strategies.

This study contributes to jurisprudential scholarship by positioning post-divorce legal status as a structural variable that shapes women's livelihood strategies. Unlike previous studies that frame creative economic participation as an outcome of empowerment policies, this research reconceptualizes the creative economy as a grassroots survival mechanism arising from legal invisibility. Theoretically, this study integrates the concept of *legal invisibility* with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to demonstrate how the absence of legal recognition actively structures women's economic behavior. Empirically, it enriches discussions on Islamic family law and gender by grounding legal analysis in the lived experiences of single mothers within Aceh's plural legal context.

Literature Review

A. Studies on Unregistered Divorce and Women's Vulnerability

Studies on Unregistered (siri) divorce and its implications for women are not new in the field of Islamic family law and Indonesian legal studies. Numerous scholars have examined this phenomenon using various approaches, predominantly normative-juridical and doctrinal perspectives. These studies generally emphasize the legal uncertainty experienced by women and children due

to the absence of state registration, particularly regarding civil status, maintenance rights, inheritance, and access to legal protection.

(Asman, 2024) In Marginalization of Women in the Problematics of Unregistered Marriage Legalization in Indonesia, analyzes unregistered marriage and divorce from the perspectives of Islamic law and positive law. The study finds that the absence of state registration systematically deprives women of enforceable legal rights, including claims to maintenance, inheritance, and child protection. The similarity between Asman's study and the present research lies in their shared concern with women's legal vulnerability following an unregistered divorce. However, Asman's analysis remains primarily normative and focuses on legal doctrine, whereas the present study extends beyond normative analysis by examining how women actively respond to legal exclusion through concrete economic survival strategies (Rahman et al., 2022). Overall, existing studies on unregistered divorce tend to position women as passive subjects of legal protection, rather than as legal actors who negotiate and reconstruct their livelihoods in the absence of formal legal recognition

B. Studies on Single Mothers and Economic Resilience

Studies on women's participation in the creative economy generally frame this sector as an alternative space for women's economic empowerment, particularly in contexts where access to formal employment is limited. However, recent scholarship has begun to critically interrogate the creative economy as a site where gendered vulnerabilities are reproduced rather than fully resolved. (Bleijenbergh et al., n.d.) In their study, *Creative economies and gendered vulnerabilities: Women's informal work in Southeast Asia*, they examine women's engagement in informal and creative economic activities across Southeast Asian contexts. Their findings demonstrate that while creative and informal work provides flexibility and income opportunities, it simultaneously exposes women to precarity, lack of social protection, and weak bargaining power. The similarity with the present study lies in the recognition that creative economic participation often operates outside formal regulatory frameworks. The difference, however, is that Scott and O'Neill focus on gendered labor vulnerability broadly, without examining marital legal status or unregistered divorce as a specific source of exclusion.

(Rahma et al., 2025) In *Entrepreneurship Motivation of Single Parent Women in Kendari City*, identify both internal factors (emotional resilience and the desire for independence) and external factors (economic pressure and limited employment opportunities) as key drivers of single mothers' entrepreneurial activities. The similarity with this study lies in the focus on single mothers and entrepreneurship. However, Rahma et al. do not link entrepreneurial engagement to women's legal status following unregistered divorce or to administrative exclusion from formal economic systems. (Hendratmi et al., 2022) Examine livelihood strategies among women entrepreneurs in Indonesia and find that human capital, social networks, and local resource utilization are crucial for business sustainability. While aligned with this study in recognizing the importance of human and social capital, their research adopts a general perspective and does not specifically address women experiencing legal vulnerability due to unregistered divorce.

(Rahman et al., 2022), In Empowerment of Single Mothers' Livelihood through a Comprehensive Social Support System, highlight the critical role of institutional and community-based support in improving the economic resilience of single mothers. Their findings show that integrated social support significantly enhances women's livelihood capacities. The similarity with the present study lies in the focus on single mothers as an economically vulnerable group. However, Rahman et al. do not treat legal status—particularly unregistered divorce—as a structural variable shaping access to economic resources. (Dziak et al., 2010) Examine the psychological well-being of working single mothers and find that work–family conflict and poor job quality exacerbate their psychological stress. While this study contributes to understanding the multidimensional burdens faced by single mothers, it does not address legal exclusion or entrepreneurship-based economic strategies, which are central to the present research.

C. Studies on Women and the Creative Economy

Studies on women's participation in the creative economy generally frame this sector as an alternative space for women's economic empowerment, particularly in contexts where access to formal employment is limited. (Rahma et al., 2025), In *Entrepreneurship Motivation of Single Parent Women in Kendari City*, identify both internal factors (emotional resilience and the desire for independence) and external factors (economic pressure and limited employment opportunities) as key drivers of single mothers' entrepreneurial activities. The similarity with this study lies in the focus on single mothers and entrepreneurship. However, Rahma et al. do not link entrepreneurial engagement to women's legal status following unregistered divorce or to administrative exclusion from formal economic systems.

Another study explored the role of women micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in empowering families economically. This study identified limited capital, access to training, and market support as key barriers. While the study explored structural barriers and women's roles in the informal sector in depth, its focus was too general and did not incorporate aspects of marital legal status or post-divorce vulnerability (Slettedal et al., 2021). (Hendratmi et al., 2022) Examine livelihood strategies among women entrepreneurs in Indonesia and find that human capital, social networks, and local resource utilization are crucial for business sustainability. While aligned with this study in recognizing the importance of human and social capital, their research adopts a general perspective and does not specifically address women experiencing legal vulnerability due to unregistered divorce.

D. Social Capital, Legal Invisibility, and Economic Exclusion

Within contemporary legal and gender studies, the concept of *legal invisibility* is used to describe individuals or groups who are socially present but administratively unrecognized by the state. This condition produces structural exclusion from legal rights, social protection, and economic opportunities, particularly in contexts characterized by legal pluralism. (Tomaro et al., 2021) Examine the structural marginalization of single mothers by demonstrating how their exclusion from social welfare and protection policies renders them

institutionally invisible within state support systems. Their analysis shows that when single mothers are not explicitly recognized in policy and administrative frameworks, they face systematic barriers in accessing economic resources, including employment opportunities, social assistance, and institutional support. Although Tomaro et al. do not frame their analysis explicitly in terms of formal legal status or unregistered divorce, their findings illustrate how *institutional non-recognition* operates as a mechanism of economic exclusion. The similarity with the present study lies in the shared emphasis on invisibility as a structural condition shaping women's economic vulnerability. The difference, however, is that Tomaro et al. focus primarily on policy and welfare regimes at a broader regional level, whereas this study situates legal invisibility within the specific socio-legal context of Aceh and examines creative economic activity as a concrete survival strategy developed by single mothers following unregistered divorce.

(Yan & Liu, 2023) demonstrate that social networks and community support play a crucial role in strengthening the economic resilience of female-headed households. The similarity with this study lies in acknowledging the importance of social capital. The difference, however, is that their analysis does not consider marital or divorce legal status as a structural determinant of access to resources. (Hilman Affandy & Ahmad, 2024) In their study on single mothers in Brunei, they find that women with non-conventional legal status are often excluded from formal assistance schemes due to administrative requirements. This finding aligns with the present study in highlighting administrative exclusion. Nevertheless, their research does not engage with the creative economy as a livelihood strategy and is situated in a socio-legal context distinct from Aceh.

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E. Research Gap

Based on the reviewed literature, three key research gaps can be identified. First, studies on unregistered divorce predominantly adopt normative-juridical approaches and rarely examine women's lived experiences and active responses to legal exclusion. Second, research on single mothers and the creative economy tends to overlook legal status as a critical analytical variable shaping access to economic resources. Third, there remains a lack of integrative studies that systematically connect unregistered divorce, legal invisibility, and creative economic survival strategies within the specific socio-legal context of Aceh, where Islamic law and state law intersect. Accordingly, this study seeks to address these gaps by integrating Islamic family law analysis, the concept of legal invisibility, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to examine how single mothers following unregistered divorce utilize creative economic activities as survival strategies under conditions of legal and institutional constraint.

Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the survival strategies of single mothers after an unregistered divorce through creative economic empowerment in Aceh. This approach was chosen because it allows for exploration of the experiences, meanings, and social dynamics faced by women in legally and economically vulnerable situations. As an analytical framework, this study uses the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). This framework is used to understand how individuals, in this case single mothers, access and utilize five main types of assets: human capital, social capital, financial capital, physical capital, and natural capital, in developing sustainable livelihood strategies. The SLF also considers the influence of policies, institutions, and the context of social vulnerability surrounding women's lives after an unregistered divorce.

The data in this study were obtained from two main sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observation with post-regular divorced single mothers active in creative economy activities, female entrepreneurs in the sector, and officials from the Aceh Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) and the Aceh Industry and Trade Agency (Disperindag). These four groups were selected as informants because of their direct involvement in women's economic empowerment and the development of the creative economy sector in Aceh. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from policy documents, government reports, statistical data, and relevant scientific literature. This data was used to strengthen the analysis and provide context for empowerment practices found in the field.

The data collection process was conducted in stages, using semi-structured interviews to maintain flexibility yet remain focused on the research theme. Observations were conducted at businesses or creative economy activities run by single mothers to directly observe their strategies and the challenges they face. Documentation in the form of regulations, government programs, and annual government reports was also analyzed to understand existing institutional support. Data analysis was conducted thematically, identifying emerging patterns, categories, and themes based on the SLF framework. Researchers linked field findings to five types of livelihood assets and the institutional and social conditions that influence single mothers' economic strategies. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques, and member checking with several informants to ensure accurate interpretation. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a complete picture of how women who experience divorce without formal legality are still able to survive and recover economically through the creative economy sector, as well as how social and institutional support structures play a role in this process.

Discussion

This study aims to understand how creative economic empowerment can serve as a survival strategy for single mothers following an unregistered divorce in Aceh, utilizing the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) as a foundation for

analysis. The primary focus is on exploring how single mothers access and manage various livelihood assets—human, social, financial, physical, and natural—to address the social and economic vulnerabilities resulting from unregistered divorce. Through this approach, the study seeks to explain the complex and contextual empowerment process as a self-directed effort to build sustainable livelihood resilience.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to filling the gap in the literature regarding single mother empowerment in the context of unregistered divorce in Aceh, particularly in relation to the creative economy as a potential sector for strengthening livelihoods. By utilizing the SLF, this study not only highlights economic aspects but also examines the interaction between social and institutional capital that influences single mothers' ability to survive and thrive economically. This approach is important because it demonstrates that single mothers' survival depends not only on income but also on their social networks, knowledge, and institutional support.

1. Vulnerability Context

The legal status of unregistered divorce is a major source of vulnerability for single mothers in Aceh. This unclear legal status results in single mothers losing access to administrative rights such as child identity documents, social benefits, and legal certainty regarding maintenance, as also expressed by informants from relevant agencies/institutions. This reinforces findings from studies on the marginalization of women due to unregistered marriages, which show that unregistered marriages in Indonesia directly impact the rights of women and children (Asman, 2024). The psychological and social burdens experienced by single mothers due to unregistered divorce are also reflected in field findings that they face significant economic pressure, family challenges, and difficulties accessing capital and information. These findings are reinforced by studies that found that the accumulation of social and economic pressures significantly worsens the mental health of single mothers, especially when they lack adequate social support and legal protection (Sartor et al., 2023).

In this context, the condition of single mothers after an unregistered divorce in Aceh also shows similarities with research findings that emphasize that the conflict between work demands and family responsibilities worsens the psychological well-being of single mothers, especially when access to formal employment or economic support is limited (Dziak et al., 2010). Creative economy actors also cited fluctuating and tight market conditions in this study as external factors that exacerbate the challenges of maintaining their businesses. This aligns with research on mothers working in the creative economy sector during the pandemic, which showed that market instability and a lack of social security exacerbate pre-existing gender and economic inequalities (Feder et al., 2025).

While creative economic empowerment has the potential to increase the independence of single mothers, its success depends heavily on access to capital, training, and specific institutional and policy support. International literature also demonstrates this, with research emphasizing the importance of social support and legitimacy in improving the well-being of single mothers juggling multiple roles amidst social pressures (Jones et al., 2022).

2. Livelihood Assets

In terms of livelihood capital, this study found a common view between government officials and single mothers that human and social capital are key assets in empowering the creative economy. Government officials/institutional informants considered basic entrepreneurial skills and community networks as important assets, while single mothers identified human capital in the form of business skills, creativity, and product innovation that they developed independently. These findings align with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), which places human capital as a crucial foundation for building economic resilience. The study confirms that personal competencies and adaptability play a significant role in determining single mothers' success in navigating social and economic pressures (Jones et al., 2022). Other studies have also noted that in the creative economy sector, human capital such as creativity, innovation, and work flexibility are key factors for survival amidst unstable market conditions (Feder et al., 2025).

In terms of social capital, this study shows that single mothers are increasingly utilizing informal networks and the use of digital platforms (such as social media) to expand their marketing and build business networks. This finding is consistent with studies showing that social support from communities and informal networks can be an important buffer against psychological and social stress. In the local context, social networks also provide an alternative source of access to information and market opportunities amid limited institutional support. (Sartor et al., 2023). Financial capital remains a major weakness. Access to formal business financing is severely limited, primarily due to the lack of legal guarantees resulting from unregistered marital status. This reinforces research findings highlighting how unregistered marriages in Indonesia result in single mothers losing access to administrative rights and formal financial services. Within the SLF framework, weak financial capital is often a barrier to developing or even sustaining small businesses (Asman, 2024).

This study also found that some single mothers have begun utilizing local natural resources such as bamboo, pandanus, and water hyacinth as raw materials for their craft businesses. However, this utilization remains suboptimal due to limited technical training and minimal support within the supply chain. This aligns with research showing that female artisans face challenges in allocating their time effectively, as they must balance domestic obligations with productive activities. Furthermore, limited access to training, production skills, and markets are factors that hinder productivity and income growth (Suandi et al., 2018). Meanwhile, physical capital, such as sewing machines, vehicles, and shops, is already owned by most single mothers to support their businesses. However, this ownership is unevenly distributed, and many single mothers still rely on borrowed assets or grants from government social programs and partner institutions. In SLF, limitations on physical capital often increase dependency and limit opportunities for business-scale innovation.

3. Structures and Processes

This research reveals that to date, no specific programs or policies are targeting single mothers resulting from unregistered divorces. Consequently, legal

and administrative barriers are the main obstacles to recognizing their status and accessing formal assistance from the government and social institutions. Informants from government agencies/institutions emphasized the importance of cross-sectoral coordination to support this vulnerable group. However, the reality on the ground shows that single mothers resulting from unregistered divorces remain structurally marginalized, particularly within the social assistance system and state administrative services. These findings are consistent with a study in Brunei that highlighted how formal support for single mothers often fails to take into account unregistered marital status. The study found that single mothers in Brunei face similar challenges, particularly in meeting legal requirements set by social service agencies. Yet, many of them are women forced to live without spousal support due to informal divorce or nonmarital relationships (Hilman Affandy & Ahmad, 2024).

The study also noted that single mothers demonstrate a strong culture of innovation and adaptation in running their businesses as a survival strategy. They leverage opportunities available outside the formal system, such as local community networks, digital platforms, and home-based businesses. This corroborates previous research findings that, in a policy vacuum, single mothers tend to develop autonomous strategies to sustain their households' economies, even without adequate legal protection or state support (Hilman Affandy & Ahmad, 2024). This integration confirms that the phenomenon of administrative exclusion due to informal legal status occurs not only in Indonesia but also in various other countries with dual or pluralistic legal systems. Therefore, the policy recommendations in this study need to be directed not only at strengthening inter-institutional coordination but also at reforming social regulations that are inclusive of informal marital statuses, which are, in fact, a social reality that cannot be ignored.

4. Livelihood Strategies

Survival strategies employed by single mothers generally draw on existing basic skills, such as homemaking, crafts, and culinary skills. This study demonstrates that single mothers rely not only on traditional skills but also adapt to technological advancements by utilizing social media and online marketing as market expansion strategies. This indicates a shift from conventional survival strategies to a digital approach that is more responsive to changing times. These findings align with research that emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurship training, particularly in digital marketing and financial reporting, to improve the capacity of single mothers to run their businesses more professionally. The results indicate improved business management skills after training, particularly in online promotion and financial administration. (Nurrahmawati et al., 2024)

Product diversification and careful financial management are also hallmarks of single mothers' business strategies. This is supported by a study in Jambi, which showed that the sustainability of small-scale culinary businesses is largely determined by financial literacy and the ability to utilize e-commerce as a distribution channel. In the context of this study, single mothers demonstrated not only digital literacy but also a strong awareness of the importance of maintaining internal business financial stability (Murnidayanti et al., 2025).

Some single mothers in this study also chose to involve family or workers in operational processes as a way of strengthening internal human resources. This suggests that their survival strategies are not only individual but also collective and adaptive to social conditions. This phenomenon is reinforced by research findings describing how single mothers in Malaysia manage home businesses while managing the household workload. The involvement of children or other family members is a natural solution to managing limited time and energy (Razak et al., 2024). Within the context of sustainable livelihoods theory, this single mother approach reflects an effort to maximize human, social, and financial capital. As outlined in the study, Indonesian women entrepreneurs' survival strategies include utilizing existing resources, adapting to technology, and strengthening social networks as a form of resilience in the face of economic pressures. (Hendratmi et al., 2022).

5. Livelihood Outcomes

Based on the results of their businesses, there has been increased economic independence and varying degrees of success among single mothers. Service informants assessed that some businesses have become self-sufficient and have entered broader markets, while single mothers reported that their businesses have become a primary source of income, albeit with varying degrees of stability. This empowerment has also increased the self-confidence and social engagement of single mothers. However, challenges to business sustainability remain, particularly related to limited capital and inadequate legal support. Some single mothers have begun to build customer loyalty and market recognition, which serve as important social and economic capital for strengthening their businesses.

This study found that businesses run by single mothers have significantly contributed to increased economic independence, with most informants stating that their businesses are now the primary source of family income. However, the level of business stability and success achieved varies, depending on individual capacity, market conditions, and access to capital and institutional support. This finding is in line with the results of a previous study on female entrepreneurs in Batam, which concluded that women's involvement in micro-enterprises has a positive influence on domestic income, but success is greatly influenced by educational background, business experience, and access to capital (Purba et al., 2025). This strengthens the finding that the success of single mothers' businesses is not only determined by their entrepreneurial activity, but also by the structural conditions and initial capital they have.

The research also shows that businesses run by single mothers serve not only as a means of economic fulfillment but also play a significant role in strengthening their social and psychological well-being. Several informants revealed that involvement in businesses gave them greater self-confidence, expanded their social networks, and increased their sense of appreciation in their communities. This phenomenon demonstrates that entrepreneurship for single mothers has multidimensional impacts, including on psychological and social well-being. This finding aligns with a study that found that social support significantly impacts the psychological well-being of single mothers. In the study, women who were involved in work or business activities and supported by a positive social

environment demonstrated higher levels of self-confidence and stronger psychological resilience (Rifayanti et al., 2025). This shows that economic activity is not only a financial solution, but also a means of self-empowerment and social empowerment for single mothers.

Furthermore, this study also found that some single mothers began to build customer loyalty and market recognition, which became important social and economic capital in strengthening the sustainability of their businesses. This is supported by research, which explains that online-based single-mother businesses often rely on personal relationships with customers as a strategy to maintain the market and increase consumer trust. (Indrayanti. et al., 2023). This strategy is an important form of market adaptation for small businesses, especially those run individually and based on households. However, the challenges to business sustainability are still significant, especially in the form of limited capital and minimal legal support. This strengthens the findings, which state that women entrepreneurs in the UMKM sector often face obstacles in the form of access to legal protection, business licensing, and advocacy against economic and social discrimination. (Indrayanti. et al., 2023) In the context of single mothers, this condition is exacerbated by the double burden and limited human resources in business operations.

Thus, the findings of this study are not only consistent with previous studies but also add an important dimension to how social capital, such as customer loyalty, self-confidence, and community networks, strengthen the sustainability of single mothers' businesses, especially amidst limited financial capital and inadequate regulations. A successful empowerment strategy must integrate financial, social, and psychological aspects to support sustainable economic independence for this vulnerable group.

Conclusion

This research shows that single mothers resulting from unregistered divorce in Aceh face complex vulnerabilities encompassing legal, social, economic, and psychological aspects. Their unclear legal status deprives them of access to basic administrative rights such as child identity documents, social assistance, and legal certainty regarding livelihoods. This situation is exacerbated by high social and economic pressures and minimal formal support from the state. In terms of livelihood assets, single mothers possess key strengths in human capital, including entrepreneurial skills, creativity, and product innovation, as well as social capital through community networks and the use of digital platforms. However, financial capital remains a key weakness due to limited access to formal financing, due to their unrecognized legal status. Meanwhile, utilization of local natural resources and ownership of physical capital, such as means of production, remain unequal, with a tendency to rely on external assistance.

In terms of institutional structures and processes, the absence of specific policies or programs for single mothers resulting from an unregistered divorce contributes to structural marginalization. While potential cross-sectoral support exists, implementation on the ground has not effectively addressed the needs of this group. Consequently, many single mothers choose informal channels and rely

on autonomous, community-based strategies for survival. The livelihood strategies developed by single mothers are adaptive and innovative, relying on basic skills such as cooking, sewing, and crafts, and utilizing digital technology for marketing and business management. They also demonstrate a collective approach by involving family members in business operations as a response to resource constraints. In terms of livelihood outcomes, single mothers' involvement in micro-enterprises has been shown to increase economic independence and contribute significantly to family income. Beyond the economic impact, business activities also strengthen self-confidence, social networks, and psychological well-being. However, the main challenges to business sustainability remain limited capital, minimal legal protection, and a lack of sustainable institutional support.

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