

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows a general overview of female-headed households as an agenda of global sustainable development goals in Indonesia, research questions, research objectives, research significance, and thesis outline.

1.1 Background

The issues of households that are headed and maintained by women arise as an agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) inseparably related with gender issues. There are two main reasons that female-headed households have become an exciting topic for scholars of International Relations as part of gender analysis. The first one is gender equality to empower all women. It is believed that failing to empower either women or men to be content with their capacities is a form of disrupted human rights. However, the gap is socially constructed between the two genders that differentiate the appropriate roles and responsibilities in the societies, especially for patriarchal communities. Thus, women are primarily discriminated against with no voice, no power, and no potential, which leads to a lack of opportunities to develop themselves and participate in decision-making for their own lives.

The second one is decent work promoting sustainable, inclusive economic growth with productive employment. The fact that men gain many more chances to

pursue their willingness than women creates a gap and becomes the stepping stone to women's empowerment. However, if both have the same chances to be productive, there will be considerable chances to sustain economic development. Even more, gender equality in accessing decent jobs can boost the struggle for global economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. According to SDGs, the rising global inflation, supply chain barriers, policy uncertainties, and labor market challenges have been hampered by COVID-19 for the last three years (United Nations, 2022). The condition has further regressed due to the Ukraine issues, where women become much more vulnerable.

Following the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, it is critical to represent both men and women equally in social and economic opportunities to promote sustainable economic growth in each state. The state's urgency related to the gender disparity has increased economic growth. It is proven that the higher the state's gender equality, the more developed it will be. Referring to the data from the World Economic Forum in 2022, It is globally recorded from 146 countries that there has been a significant improvement in closing the gender gap, with a record-breaking 68.1% closure compared to 66.7% in 2021. However, this still means that it will take around 132 years more to achieve global gender parity ultimately. Likewise, the regional performance in East Asia and the Pacific has accomplished 69% gender equality, with 13 of 19 countries improving their scores, and the region will still take 168 years to close the gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2022).

The index of the World Economic Forum in 2022 reveals that there has been significant progress in closing the gender gap in areas such as health and education, of which gender inequality has been closed by 95.8% in Health and Survival and by 94.4% in educational attainment. However, there is still a long way to go regarding economic participation and political empowerment. The index shows that the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity is only 60.3% closed, which means that women still face significant barriers to accessing and participating in the economy. It includes unequal pay, lack of access to capital and resources, and limited opportunities for leadership and decision-making roles. Additionally, the gender gap in political empowerment is much smaller at 22%, indicating that women are significantly underrepresented in political leadership positions (World Economic Forum, 2022). It can have a range of negative consequences, including a lack of diverse perspectives and experiences in decision-making processes, as well as a failure to address issues that disproportionately affect women.

The World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index in 2022 portrays that women still lag behind men by a considerable margin in economic equity, highlighting the ongoing challenge of gender inequality in economic opportunities and outcomes. There are only five countries that achieve scores higher than 80% in terms of equal wages for similar work, namely Albania (84.5%), Burundi (84.0%), Algeria (81.2%), Iceland (81.2%) and Singapore (80.5%). Most countries, at least 129 countries, have recorded a reduction in women's labor-force participation compared to the men's, negatively

impacting their scores. Instead, only 14 countries are promoting women's workforce participation, of which the highest achievement belongs to Saudi Arabia, with an increase of 0.97% in its gender parity score. Furthermore, it highlights women's share in professional and technical roles, along with senior and managerial roles, which does not significantly progress from 5.4% in 2021 to 6.7% in 2022. The smallest share of women with senior and managerial roles is only 4.5% of workers in Pakistan, and the highest share is 70% of women with senior roles. On the other hand, the women's representation of professional technical workers in Chad is less than 18%, which is inversely proportional to Belarus's 70% (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Meanwhile, the global educational attainment of women has nearly completed gender parity, and this achievement has been equitably distributed across the economic levels. Based on the World Economic Forum report, the educational attainment in high-middle-income scores is 99% compared to lower-middle income, 95%, and low income, 81%. The countries are prevalent with gender equality in literacy by focusing on primary education. It is still found that there is a large gap in schooling opportunities to the next level, such as secondary education; at least 16 countries reported a more significant 10% gender gap based on enrollment in 2022. In addition to tertiary education, it is noted that only 29 countries closed, less than 29% of which the most performances are in Latin America and the Caribbean (World Economic Forum, 2022).

On the contrary, the political empowerment of women is the most enormous remaining gap in the global index. The measurement of gender equality in political

empowerment seems to be no progress in Vanuatu, with a subindex of 0%, inverting Iceland, closing the gap of 87%. In addition, only 11 countries are closing more than 50% of their gap. 39% of countries show no progress from the previous year. The trend is that those top-score countries in 2021 get the higher score + 11%, so the gap share of women's political empowerment creates a more extensive divergence with the low-score countries (World Economic Forum, 2022).

At this current progress, the gender gap is still wide open across the world, especially in developing countries; thus, it cannot afford to be ignored not only as it is congenitally unfair but also as it is believed that better gender parity can boost economic growth. These practices have been proven to increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in some states with extraordinary powers, such as the United Kingdom (UK) can afford an additional \$250 billion in GDP, United States of America can manage an additional \$1,750 billion in GDP, and China highly stands for additional \$2.5 trillion in 2017 (World Economic Forum, 2017). This phenomenon contrasts with the developing countries where the more significant gender gap aligns with their economic growth.

Aside from understanding the impact of women's critical role towards sustainable global economic growth, the gender gap draws many divergences among states worldwide concerning with the headship of households. Nowadays, the emergence of female-headed households is undeniable. It is documented that single women as the head of households remain rising from 17.6% in 1999 to 22.6% in 2019

(Urban Institute, 2021). According to the International Labor Organization, it is defined that female-headed households are households where either no adult men are present, owing to divorce, separation, migration, non-marriage, or widowhood; or where the men, although present, do not contribute to the household income, because of illness or disability, old age, alcoholism or similar incapacity (but not because of unemployment) (UN ESCWA, 2022). The transformational structure of households becomes a significant phenomenon worldwide as it can affect the country as households are assumed to be society's most foundational socio-economic unit. The household's decision-making impacts the division of goods and services, the arrangement of public institutions, and the requirements for school and public infrastructures.

Therefore, the emerging households headed by females are not the product of cultural patterns but the result of social-economic dynamics because the responsibility of the head of households is involuntarily assigned to them. In the meantime, the term of female-headed households is not equally carried on compared with male-headed households. The headship of households refers to those who are liable for the household's survival, including the breadwinner to fulfill the daily needs, the manager to maintain the household continuity, and the decision maker in the household. These responsibilities are usually referred to as the male or husband in the household; however, many households are led by women.

Unfortunately, female-headed households are usually overlooked as the breadwinner; thus, they are prone to discrimination and poverties. The facts uncovering a large number of households with female headship is undeniable, including in Indonesia, regardless of its patriarchal culture. The female-headed households are not only those who are single but also some of them are still married. Those single women who act as the heads of the household are widows who are divorced from their marriages and who are left by their deceased husbands. Otherwise, the unmarried single women who have to deal with the burdens of the household's head are the first-born daughters and the girls giving birth before the marriage. Not only are those single women obliged with the headed households, but also the married women take over the responsibilities because of the distant spouses without provision from their husbands, their disabled husband conditions, and their jobless husbands.

The current stages drive two perspectives related to female-headed households. Some argue that the hardship of being the head of households is how women figure out how to promote their empowerment rather than discourage them. Nevertheless, most arguments oppose the idea as those states that have closed the gender gap may gain this level, assuming that those women have been empowered with equal chances, educations, and workforces. However, the facts are different in those developing countries, and this occurrence is still dominantly related to poverty. The rising number of households headed by females remains worthy of massive attention because those

women have to bear the disadvantages of being burdened with poverty, gender discrimination, and support partners.

Reflecting on the global and regional description of the gender gap correlated with the female-headed households either clashing down or pulling up a country's economic development and sustainability, Indonesia needs to map out the current issues not only because of the cultural backgrounds that marginalize women's headship in households but also the number of households headed by women that is no longer undeniable. Indonesia is dominated by a patriarchal culture, in which the men naturally lead the households; otherwise, the women who are forcibly holding the responsibility of household headship are still discriminated against with judgmental stigma, denying their backgrounds to be the head of households. Indonesia noted that 12.72% of households are headed by females in 2022, showing that the urban classification is slightly higher than the rural classification. It is found that women head 13.37% of urban households, whereas rural female-headed households are estimated at 11.83% (Indonesian Central Statistics Agency, 2023). This indicates that a higher proportion of women are taking on the role of household head in urban areas than in rural areas. However, it's essential to record the exact numbers of female-headed households in both urban and rural areas as the data should be taken into account to fully understand the extent of this phenomenon.

Indonesia's census differs the households based on the gender of household's headship. Unfortunately, the data provided by Statistics Indonesia does not specifically

represent the formation of household's members so it is not clear to whom the female-headed household refers. Those female-headed households are not only those registered as single parents but also married women. Thus, the total number could be much higher than it is reported. However, it is eloquent to acknowledge their status and background to classify how they contribute as heads of households. Moreover, it can open the door to how they should be reliably treated to manage their liability as household decision-makers.

The emergence of female-headed household as an agenda of SDGs is concerned with women's empowerment to fight the gender gap and women's contribution to economic growth. Indonesia ranks 92nd with a score of 69.7%, and the gender gap is closed (World Economic Forum, 2022). The retrieved data from World Economic Forum's Index 2022 cite a reduction in women's labor force participation in which the share of women still working is 2.3%. Among the 135 million women in Indonesia, 56% of workforce participation still impacts roughly over 1.3 million women whose ages are around 15-64 years old (World Economic Forum, 2022). This significant gap in terms of economic participation and opportunity causes gender pay gap that persists across all industries, with women earning less than men in both the public and private sectors. Inversely, the women's portion of professional and technical workers has been equal to men.

Meanwhile, according to the same report by the World Economic Forum, Indonesia ranks 80th for economic participation and opportunity, reaching 67.4%. It

reveals that the gap between females and males in labor force participation is 27.96%, with an estimated earned income of \$6.81K. Further, the indicator of 1 million people consists of females 55.13% and males 84.03% of the labor force, with unemployed female adults reaching 3.93% and workers employed part-time at 3.93% (World Economic Forum, 2022). This high rate highlights the need for more opportunities for women in the labor market. While educational attainment is nearly equal between men and women. Although educational attainment nearly closes the gender gap at 97.2%, Indonesia still ranks 102nd, with the gap between females and males at 4.59% based on enrollment in primary education (World Economic Forum, 2022). Unlikely, secondary and tertiary education enrolment narrows the gap with graduates' attainment of female 25.27%, which is higher than male 17.31%. It is linked with the professional and technical workers ranking 1st as closing the gap of 2.07% (World Economic Forum, 2022). On the other hand, political empowerment and freedom concede that women have unequal rights to access justice and are nearly equal to afford the freedom of empowerment. The women's share in political roles maximizes, from 29.7% to 32.4% (World Economic Forum, 2022). Following the clarification of the data provided, it is vital to get off the ground to overcome the inequality issues, either in natural treatment or social construction towards women, especially those women who act as heads of households.

Therefore, this research will assess that the gap relies not only on gender between males and females but also on females as heads of households. Most

institutions, both government and non-government organizations, which are concerned with this issue are ignorant of their existence with the assumptions of being in partnership with their spouse as breadwinner; however, their reality is worse than those deliberately known as single women act as the head of household. The influences of their conditions, whether they can afford decent work to earn their livings, can stimulate economic growth. Thus, it will determine their impacts on economic growth if those women and girls who head the households are empowered with decent work.

Accordingly, this research is purposed to discover the gap among female-headed households, comparing those who bear the responsibility as encouragement and those who are related to poverty. Consequently, it needs to examine the responses from the government and civil society to conclude that either their neighborhoods support and the governments assist them, or they are undermined by their status, capacity, and condition. The supportive responses will lead to the women's empowerment of female-headed households, which is parallel with the goals of sustainable development to close the gender gap and boost economic growth. Conversely, the unsupportive responses from both civil society and government shape the discouragement to fight for their poverties. The perpetuated stage creates a more significant gender gap and a decline in economic growth.

1.2 Research Questions

The female headship of households in Indonesia is a new phenomenon amid its patriarchal social culture. As women take over the headship of households, they are meant to fulfill the requirement for the head of households to be either a decision-maker or a breadwinner. Unfortunately, women are assumed to be weak characters compared to men, causing female-headed households to be identical with poverty due to the lack of workforce participation that resulted from their education pursuits. In other words, the lower their educational attainment, the fewer opportunities they afford to the workforce, and vice versa; the higher the education quality they pursue, the better jobs they will occupy. Better jobs indeed promise better incomes. Thus, this research is going to analyze the current stage of the households headed by women in Indonesia through the following research questions:

1. Why should the female-headed household become an explicit issue for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
2. How are policies and programs designed to overcome the issues of female-headed households as the commitment to Sustainable Development Goals in Indonesia?

1.3 Research Objectives

Regarding the research questions that focus on the female-headed households linked with the global sustainability goals in Indonesia, this research aims to expose

the connectivity between the emergence of female-headed households with sustainable development based on two goals, gender equality and economic growth, by figuring out the reasons of the female-headed household become an agenda of SDGs. It elaborates the clear definitions, characteristics, and categories of female-headed households, leading to suitable program designs for women's empowerment to those who bear the household headship. Therefore, this research will investigate how the government and civil society respond to female-headed households in Indonesia and examine their commitment to empowering female-headed households.

1.4 Research Significance

This research is expected to give insights into academic significance and practical contribution, particularly in international relations, by elaborating on female-headed households. First, the academic significance: This research is expected to enrich the knowledge about the importance of women's empowerment for female-headed households concerned with Indonesia's sustainable development goals. Furthermore, this research will emphasize how liberal feminism as one of International Theories reveals its connectivity with the national and global developments described by the case study of female-headed households in Indonesia. Second, the practical significance: In terms of development and international development, it is expected that the results of this research can help the stakeholders to organize the programs to empower women in line to reach parity and boost economic growth.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The thesis outline in this research is a writing organization designed to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the topics being discussed. This study is structured into five chapters, which are presented as follows:

1. **Chapter I** - Introduction provides an overview of the research, including its background, objectives, significance, and outline. The introduction briefly describes the gender inequality that refers to female-headed households as an agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to the state's economic development.
2. **Chapter II** – Theoretical Framework reviews literature about female-headed households in economic development and women's empowerment. It also analyses previous studies and identifies gaps that this research aims to fill through the theories and concepts.
3. **Chapter III** – Methodology describes the research design, including the research approach, research method, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques.
4. **Chapter IV** – Result and Discussion presents the study's findings about the state's urgency and regulations regarding female-headed households as an agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in Indonesia. It essentially interprets the interconnection between women's empowerment and economic development.

5. **Chapter V** – Conclusion and Recommendation discusses the implications of the findings, drawing connections between female-headed households and liberal feminism in the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, it summarizes the key contributions of the research and suggests areas for future study.

