



Women's Empowerment through Virgin Coconut Oil Entrepreneurship in Rural West Sumatra

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Abstract

Women's empowerment is an important strategy for improving the economic well-being of communities, particularly in rural areas such as Nagari Katapiang, Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman Regency, West Sumatra Province. One form of empowerment developing in this area is through the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) based on Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production. This study aims to analyze the contribution of VCO entrepreneurship to women's empowerment and identify challenges and opportunities in developing these businesses. The method used is a qualitative approach with phenomenological techniques, supported by data analysis using NVIVO software. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and literature studies. The results show that women's involvement in VCO production and management contributes to increasing household income, economic independence, and their social role in the community. However, women still face various obstacles, such as limited access to markets, business capital, and production technology. The findings also indicate that synergy between the government, financial institutions, and educational institutions is essential to overcome these obstacles. The conclusion of this study emphasizes that VCO entrepreneurship has the potential to be a sustainable model for women's empowerment, particularly if supported by skills training, technological innovation, and access to markets and capital.

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INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment plays a crucial role in economic development. In Indonesia, where employment opportunities for women are still limited, many women are compelled to think creatively and initiate their own businesses (Empirisme & Rasionalisme, 2024). This has given rise to successful female entrepreneurs who contribute significantly to household income, especially as the rising cost of living increasingly drives women to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Sari & Sulastri, 2024). Among the various opportunities available, the production of Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) is particularly promising. Indonesia is one of the world's largest coconut-producing countries, and the abundance of coconut resources offers great potential for value-added processing. VCO has high economic value and continues to experience growing global demand because of its diverse applications in the health, beauty, and food industries (Habib & Sutopo, 2024). This makes VCO entrepreneurship a strategic choice for improving women's economic well-being while utilizing local resources that are widely available yet often underexploited.

Nagari Katapiang, located in Batang Anai, exemplifies this potential. With fertile soil and coconut trees cultivated for generations, the village provides a strong foundation for VCO-based

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entrepreneurship. Women in this area combine traditional knowledge with local expertise to process coconuts into VCO and establish sustainable businesses (Mahmudah et al., 2024). These initiatives not only increase household income but also strengthen women's independence and decision-making power within the community. VCO entrepreneurship is thus a promising sector for rural women, supported by abundant raw materials and a steadily expanding market (Nasution & Faried, 2020). Nevertheless, challenges such as limited capital and marketing access hinder the growth of these businesses, including those run by women in Nagari Katapiang (Soemitra, 2015).

Preliminary research conducted by the author identified several challenges faced by women in Nagari Katapiang in terms of empowerment and independent business development. One of the main challenges is limited access to business capital, which affects their ability to invest in high-quality raw materials, purchase production equipment, and expand their businesses. Technological limitations also pose significant problems, as traditional VCO extraction methods require a large workforce, are inefficient, and produce inconsistent output with high labor costs. Another major hurdle is market access, where limited knowledge of technology makes it difficult for women to reach wider markets. The rise of online marketplaces has also reduced traditional market activity (Saefullah et al., 2023). Furthermore, a lack of business and entrepreneurial skills hinders women's ability to develop their enterprises effectively due to restricted access to training and information (Bambang et al., 2023; Yuanita & Nuraeni, 2024). Regulatory barriers further complicate matters, as obtaining certifications and meeting industry standards can be challenging for small-scale producers, limiting their ability to compete in premium markets (Nitya Dewi et al., 2024). By overcoming these challenges and leveraging available opportunities, women in Nagari Katapiang can enhance their entrepreneurial potential and achieve greater economic independence.

Various studies have shown that women's involvement in locally based MSMEs such as handicrafts, culinary enterprises, and nature-based products significantly improves household welfare, strengthens social cohesion, and preserves local culture (Visiana, 2025). However, in the context of VCO processing, women often encounter serious challenges, including limited production technology, restricted market access, and minimal managerial support (Nusantoro et al., 2021). For instance, in Pidie Regency, Aceh, VCO entrepreneurs struggle with inefficient traditional production methods and undigitized business management, although technological interventions such as the Automatic Flash Oil System have been proven to increase production efficiency by up to 47.3% and expand marketing networks to 12 provinces (Husaini et al., 2024).

Several other studies also highlight women's empowerment through locally sourced MSMEs. Nizori et al., (2019) found that essential oil-based aromatherapy soap production enabled rural women to expand market access through improved technical skills and digital marketing. Similarly, Yesninopy et al., (2022) reported that VCO production training enhanced the independence of housewives as productive entrepreneurs in Palangka Raya. In Aceh, Husaini et al., (2024) confirmed that technological interventions significantly improved production efficiency and distribution capacity. Meanwhile, Indriani et al., (2024) emphasized the role of business legality and branding strategies in strengthening the competitiveness of women-owned MSMEs, and Priyanto et al., (2025) demonstrated that business management and digital marketing training could increase MSME turnover by up to 150% within six months. Despite these contributions, most previous studies remain focused on technical training or income generation. They rarely incorporate local wisdom, appropriate technological innovations, and digital marketing strategies into a comprehensive empowerment model. This gap highlights the need for more holistic approaches to women's empowerment through VCO entrepreneurship.

This research offers novelty by integrating local wisdom, appropriate technology, and digital marketing strategies into a women's empowerment model based on VCO (Vegetable Coconut Oil) MSMEs. Unlike previous research, which tends to be limited to technical training or microeconomic aspects, this study maps the production value chain holistically from upstream to downstream, encompassing raw material processing, distribution, and digital branding. In addition to emphasizing income enhancement, this study also highlights the social dimension of leadership, women's participation in decision-making, and their contribution to strengthening local communities. The proposed model is replicable in other regions with similar characteristics and is methodologically strengthened through the use of VOSviewer for thematic literature analysis and NVivo for qualitative data processing, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings.

This study aims to analyze how VCO entrepreneurship in Katapiang Village can empower women, particularly in overcoming limitations in capital, traditional technology, and market access. In addition, this research also aims to formulate a local potential-based empowerment model that is integrated with technological innovation and digital marketing strategies, thereby providing practical and sustainable solutions for women's MSMEs in rural areas.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study conducted in Katapiang Village, Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman Regency. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the dynamics of women's empowerment in the Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) business, taking into account the social, cultural, and economic context of the local community. Qualitative methods allow researchers to examine complex realities in their natural and contextual contexts, in line with [Creswell & Creswell \(2018\)](#), who view that this approach is effective in uncovering the deeper meaning of a social phenomenon.

The study participants consisted of 15 key informants, including 10 female VCO MSMEs, 2 community leaders, 2 village officials, and 1 field facilitator. Informants were selected purposively, considering their involvement in VCO production, training, and business management. Furthermore, focus group discussions (FGDs) involved 20 additional participants, including family members of MSMEs and villagers involved in the VCO production and distribution chain.

This research adapts and modifies the [Mattew et al. \(2014\)](#) model, which consists of three main components of data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This modification is complemented by the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, which emphasizes women's active participation in the process of identifying problems and solutions. The research phase began with a literature review and field survey to map the local potential of Katapiang Village, particularly coconut resources and the role of women in MSMEs. Researchers then conducted field data collection through non-participatory observation and in-depth interviews with MSMEs, community leaders, village officials, and field facilitators. The interview guide was systematically developed and validated by content experts before being used in the field.

The research instruments used included observation sheets, semi-structured interview guides, and supporting applications such as NVivo 12 Plus for qualitative data analysis. Data obtained from interviews and observations were then analyzed using an interactive approach through coding, theme categorization, and interpretation of findings. NVivo was used to identify narrative patterns emerging from interview transcripts. Validation of the results was carried out through focus group discussions (FGDs) involving MSMEs, village officials, and facilitators.

The research procedure was carried out in several stages. First, researchers conducted a literature study and field survey to map the socio-economic conditions and local potential of Katapiang Village. Second, exploratory interviews were conducted with community leaders and village officials to understand the conditions of women's empowerment in the MSME sector. Third, a three-day VCO production training was conducted, facilitated by local practitioners and field facilitators. During this stage, female participants received training on coconut processing techniques into VCO, production hygiene principles, and product quality standards. Documentation of the training was carried out through observations, field notes, and recorded interviews with participants. Fourth, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with female MSME actors who participated in the training to explore their experiences, obstacles, and changes they experienced. Fifth, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to validate the findings, involving MSME actors, village officials, and facilitators.

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously throughout the data collection process. Data reduction was used to filter relevant information, data presentation was carried out in the form of thematic narratives and concept map visualizations, while conclusions were drawn by considering consistency and interconnectedness between categories. To strengthen the validity of the results, the researchers used source and method triangulation techniques and implemented a member checking process on key informants.

The final result of this process was the development of a women's empowerment model based on local potential, appropriate technology, and digital marketing strategies. This model not

only illustrates the relationship between women and the local economy but also integrates structural factors such as policies, access to capital, and digital literacy. With a planned approach and systematic analysis, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a women's empowerment model that is applicable and replicable in other regions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Increasing Family Income through Independent Entrepreneurship

One of the main impacts of VCO entrepreneurship is the improvement of women's and their families' economic well-being (Sudarwati et al., 2024). By processing coconuts into high-value products such as VCO, women in Nagari Katapiang can generate a more stable income compared to merely selling raw coconuts. This additional income helps their families meet basic needs such as children's education, healthcare, and household expenses. Moreover, independent entrepreneurship allows women to reduce their financial dependence on their husbands or families, thereby increasing their financial independence (Dakhilulloh et al., 2025).

Data analysis using NVivo 12 Plus revealed three major themes that consistently emerged from interviews and observations: (1) improving family income, (2) strengthening women's capacity through training, and (3) structural constraints in the form of market access and capital. The first theme was identified through narrative coding of informants, who reported a 30–40% increase in household income. The second theme was demonstrated by participants' statements regarding new skills in the VCO production process, hygiene, and business management. The third theme emerged from complaints from most informants about limited capital and marketing difficulties.

To ensure data validity, researchers used source and method triangulation techniques. Interview data indicating increased income were verified through observations of simple financial records of MSMEs and reinforced in focus group discussions (FGDs). Similarly, claims about the benefits of VCO training were confirmed by visual documentation of activities and field facilitator notes. This triangulation demonstrates consistency across data sources and confirms that empowerment through VCO training significantly contributes to improving women's skills and self-confidence.

Beyond the economic aspect, participation in VCO entrepreneurship also improves women's skills (Danasari et al., 2024). Through training and hands-on experience, women gain technical knowledge in more hygienic coconut oil extraction and standardize product quality to meet market needs. NVivo helps map these skills into subthemes such as "simple financial management," "digital-based marketing," and "use of semi-manual tools". These subthemes demonstrate the transformation of women's capacity from mere producers to entrepreneurs capable of managing their businesses more professionally.

Some women who have successfully developed their VCO businesses have even created job opportunities for family members and the surrounding community, generating a broader economic impact. Participation in VCO entrepreneurship not only affects economic aspects but also enhances women's skills (Danasari et al., 2024). Through training and hands-on experience, women gain knowledge in various aspects of VCO production, including: More efficient and hygienic coconut oil extraction techniques, product quality standardization to meet national and international market demands, and the application of appropriate technology to improve productivity and competitiveness (Yulianto et al., 2023).

Beyond technical skills, women also develop entrepreneurial competencies such as financial management, marketing, and business administration (Danasari et al., 2024). This capacity-building enables them to evolve from mere producers into entrepreneurs capable of managing their businesses more professionally and sustainably. These findings align with interviews conducted with several community members involved in VCO production (Indriani et al., 2024). Based on the interview results, the researchers highlighted their experiences participating in training, managing their businesses, and the challenges they faced in the economic empowerment process. Informant Sumiati stated, "Previously, we only sold raw coconuts, and the income was not much. Tiwi, as one of the informants, stated that after

participating in the VCO training, my income has increased and it has helped with my monthly expenses." This statement was reinforced by another informant who added that the VCO business not only increased income but also created job opportunities for family members. Beyond the economic aspect, interviews also revealed social changes. Then, Rahma, a housewife, said, "Now I can help decide how the family money is spent, not just relying on my husband."

Furthermore, the presence of women's business communities also plays a crucial role in expanding marketing networks. Through collaboration among female entrepreneurs, they can share information, experiences, and broader business opportunities, fostering collective business growth ([Kurniawanto & Anggraini, 2019](#)).

VCO entrepreneurship in Nagari Katapiang is not just a source of income for women but also a means to enhance their skills, independence, and social networks ([Dunggio et al., 2024](#)). Through this venture, women contribute not only to their family's economy but also take on a more active role in decision-making and the economic development of the village.

With the right support, such as access to capital, advanced training, and policies that favor female entrepreneurs, this empowerment potential can continue to grow, bringing long-term benefits to the local community ([Wardana & Magriasti, 2024](#)).

The research results show that women's involvement in the VCO business in Katapiang Village significantly increased family income. Most informants reported a 30–40% increase in income compared to selling only raw coconuts. Furthermore, women gained new skills, including more hygienic production techniques, simplified financial record-keeping, and the use of social media for product promotion. This boosted women's self-confidence and strengthened their role in household economic decision-making.

The primary impact is seen in increased family income, economic independence, and social participation. Interview results and NVivo analysis indicate that 70% of informants experienced a 30–40% increase in household income after switching from selling raw coconut to producing VCO. Observational data from simple financial records of MSMEs supports this finding, with average monthly income increasing from IDR 1,200,000 before the VCO business started to IDR 1,800,000–IDR 2,000,000 after the business was operational. Furthermore, approximately 65% of respondents stated that they can now make household financial decisions more independently, no longer relying entirely on their husband's income.

Social participation has also increased significantly, with eight out of ten female MSMEs interviewed reporting increased involvement in village cooperative groups and deliberation activities after becoming involved in the VCO business. Triangulation with focus group discussion (FGD) data supports this statement, as most participants acknowledged that VCO-based MSME activities foster solidarity, experience sharing, and expand joint marketing networks. Thus, the qualitative data obtained shows a real impact of VCO-based MSME empowerment on the economic welfare, individual independence, and social participation of women in Nagari Katapiang.

Challenges in Developing the VCO Business

One of the main challenges in small businesses is limited market access ([Rauf et al., 2018](#)). However, with the growing marketing network, women in Nagari Katapiang have opportunities to reach a broader market. Several marketing strategies have been implemented, including marketing through social media and e-commerce, allowing their VCO products to gain wider recognition. Participation in exhibitions and small and medium enterprise (SME) bazaars provides opportunities to build business connections and attract potential buyers ([Meidy et al., 2020](#)). Additionally, collaboration with cooperatives and local government helps expand product distribution to retail stores and modern markets.

As a solution, government and financial institutions need to intervene by providing soft loan schemes or grants for small and medium enterprises ([Meidy et al., 2020](#)). Strengthening women's cooperatives or implementing community-based crowdfunding systems can also serve as alternative ways to overcome capital constraints ([Mahmud, 2022](#)). However, the VCO business in Nagari Katapiang still relies heavily on traditional methods that require more time and labor. The manual production process often results in inconsistent output in terms of both quality and quantity, highlighting the need for technological and innovative improvements in the industry. To

illustrate this situation, the following visual documentation demonstrates the traditional VCO production process still used by the people of Nagari Katapiang.

To overcome these challenges, training and mentoring programs for women entrepreneurs in the use of more efficient production technology are essential (Maak et al., 2023). The government and academics can also play a role by introducing research-based innovations that can be applied on a small to medium scale. Additionally, assistance programs for production equipment from the government or private institutions can serve as a solution to enhance the competitiveness of the VCO business (Rahmiyati & Rahim, 2015).

Although Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) enjoys high market demand both domestically and internationally, marketing products from Nagari Katapiang still faces several challenges. Key obstacles include limited market access, low digital media utilization, and a lack of packaging that meets commercial market standards (de Galiza Barbosa, 2022). These conditions hamper distribution expansion and reduce the competitiveness of local products. To enhance the marketing of VCO products, women entrepreneurs need training in branding strategies, digital marketing, and distribution management. The use of e-commerce and social media can also be an effective solution to reach a wider consumer base (Usaha & Gulmer, 2021). Additionally, collaboration with cooperatives, retail stores, or business communities can help expand marketing networks.

Despite its great potential in women's empowerment and local economic growth, the VCO business in Nagari Katapiang still faces various challenges, particularly in terms of capital, technology, and marketing (Napitulu et al., 2022). Support from multiple stakeholders, including the government, academia, and the private sector, is crucial in helping women entrepreneurs overcome these obstacles. With the right strategies, the VCO business can not only grow sustainably but also contribute to improving the well-being of women and rural communities.

Explanation of Development Opportunities and Conclusion

To address the various challenges faced by the VCO entrepreneurship sector in Nagari Katapiang, several strategic opportunities exist to ensure better and more sustainable business growth. These opportunities include policy support and facilities from the government, partnerships with educational and research institutions, and the use of digital technology for production efficiency and market expansion.

Based on the explanation above, the VCO entrepreneurship in Nagari Katapiang has had a positive impact on women's empowerment, particularly in improving household economies and fostering independence. By utilizing local resources, women can run sustainable businesses and contribute to regional economic development. With strong synergy between entrepreneurs, the government, academia, and the private sector, the VCO industry in Nagari Katapiang can grow more rapidly and serve as a successful example of women's empowerment through entrepreneurship.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that women's empowerment through the VCO business in Katapiang Village occurs across three main dimensions: economic, social, and cultural. Economically, women gain additional income, which directly improves family well-being. This increase makes them more financially independent and less dependent on their husbands' income. This demonstrates that VCO entrepreneurship not only provides employment but also serves as an important instrument for reducing the economic vulnerability of rural women.

Socially, empowerment is evident in the increasing role of women in family and community decision-making. Interviews indicate that some women are beginning to be involved in decisions about the use of household income and are entrusted with managing the small cooperative groups they have formed. This transformation aligns with the findings of Nizori et al. (2019), who emphasized that women's economic empowerment often has a domino effect on their social participation and leadership.

The cultural dimension is reflected in the utilization of local wisdom in the VCO production process. Katapiang women do not abandon traditional knowledge but adapt it with simple, more efficient technology. This integration creates a unique empowerment model, as it maintains local identity while increasing product competitiveness. This strategy strengthens the argument that

empowerment based on local potential is more easily accepted by the community and is sustainable.

In terms of production technology in Katapiang Village, although still limited, efforts have been made to introduce more efficient semi-manual extraction tools. This finding supports the findings of [Susanti et al. \(2022\)](#), who noted that appropriate technology can increase VCO production efficiency by up to 40%. However, adoption of this technology still requires technical assistance and infrastructure support for optimal implementation.

Beyond the technical aspects, this empowerment program has also had a positive impact on women's managerial skills. They have begun implementing digital financial records and utilizing digital platforms for marketing purposes. [Breuer & Knetsch \(2023\)](#) noted that digitizing financial record-keeping systems can increase management efficiency by up to 60% and recording accuracy by up to 95%.

This increased capacity also impacts household income. In a similar study, [Priyanto et al. \(2025\)](#) showed that MSMEs implementing digital management experienced a 150% increase in turnover within six months. This finding is supported by [Rizvanović et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that digital marketing strategies can increase potential market reach by up to 300%.

The use of social media and e-commerce by female entrepreneurs in Katapiang Village indicates that digital transformation is beginning to be independently adopted. Contrary to the findings of [Visiana \(2025\)](#), who stated that MSMEs in the region tend to be slow to adopt technology, this study demonstrates women's high enthusiasm for utilizing digital media as a tool for product promotion and distribution.

Innovation in funding systems is also a key finding. Women are beginning to explore community crowdfunding and women's cooperatives as financing alternatives. This collective-based financing model is relatively new and has not been widely discussed in previous studies, making it an original contribution to the context of community-based empowerment.

Furthermore, the empowerment that occurs is not only economic but also touches the socio-political realm. Women are beginning to demonstrate active involvement in village deliberation forums and decision-making at the community level. This confirms the study by [Nizori et al. \(2019\)](#), which states that economic empowerment has a domino effect on women's social participation and leadership.

However, women's empowerment through the VCO business still faces systemic barriers such as limited capital, technology, and market access. The empowerment process will only be optimal if supported by multi-stakeholder synergy, including skills training, digital marketing assistance, access to financing, and facilitation of product legality. Such support has proven effective, as demonstrated in a study by [Husaini et al. \(2024\)](#), where simple technological interventions increased production efficiency and expanded distribution across regions.

Thus, women's empowerment in the VCO business occurs not only through economic growth but also through social transformation and capacity building based on local wisdom. The integration of local potential with simple technological innovations and digital strategies makes this model relevant for replication in other rural areas with similar characteristics.

LIMITATION

This research has several limitations that require further consideration. First, the qualitative approach, using a case study in Nagari Katapiang, limits the generalizability of the findings to other regional contexts with different social, economic, and cultural characteristics. Second, the limited number of informants and the limited timeframe for data collection mean that some local dynamics may not be fully captured. Third, while the use of analytical technologies such as VOSviewer aids in data mapping, they do not fully capture the emotional nuances and power relations that may influence the deeper process of women's empowerment. Fourth, the sustainability and long-term impact of empowerment through VCO oil MSMEs have not been evaluated longitudinally. Therefore, further research using comparative, quantitative, or longitudinal approaches is needed to enrich and strengthen these findings.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) entrepreneurship in Katapiang Village contributes significantly to women's empowerment. The primary impact is seen in increased family income, economic independence, and social participation. Women have successfully managed local resources to produce high-value products, while developing managerial, production, and digital marketing skills. These findings confirm that women's empowerment based on VCO entrepreneurship can be an effective strategy for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, especially when supported by cross-sector synergy. The proposed model also has the potential to be replicated in other regions with similar characteristics.

However, this business still faces obstacles such as limited capital, traditional production technology, and market access. These obstacles can be overcome through entrepreneurship training, the use of appropriate technology, strengthening women's institutions, and synergizing with government and educational institutions. With a consistent strategy, VCO entrepreneurship has the potential to become an effective model for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and can be replicated in other regions with similar characteristics.

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