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license**THE DRIVE BEHIND DOUGH: WOMEN'S
MOTIVATIONAL STRUCTURES AND SOCIAL
TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TRADITIONAL PASTRY
ENTERPRISES IN RURAL ACEH****Dewingga Dearahim^{1*}, Zulkarnain¹, Zulkarnaini¹, Wan
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dewingga.dearahim8901@grad.unri.ac.idDOI: <https://doi.org/10.30598/baileofisipvol3iss1pp1-17>**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to identify and describe the motivation levels of women engaged in traditional cake businesses in Gampong Langung, Meureubo Subdistrict, West Aceh Regency, and to reveal the dominant needs driving their entrepreneurial activities. The research is grounded in the critical role of home-based traditional cake enterprises as a source of supplementary income, contributing to family welfare and women's social transformation in rural settings. A quantitative descriptive approach was employed, using a Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5) with 15 items representing Maslow's five hierarchical needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Findings show that 40% of respondents have high motivation, 40% moderate, and 20% low. Physiological and safety needs recorded the highest scores, while self-actualization scored the lowest. Most entrepreneurs are driven by economic necessity and family stability, with self-fulfillment motivations still emerging. Highly motivated individuals tend to have family support, income growth, and long-term business orientation, while those with low motivation face barriers that hinder entrepreneurship. This study's novelty lies in mapping the motivational structure of rural women entrepreneurs in Aceh and reinforcing Maslow's theory in the context of community-based economic empowerment. It recommends need-based strategies to enhance motivation, promote sustainable growth, and support women's social transformation and rural economic independence.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, Traditional Food Business, Rural Economy, Motivation, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

INTRODUCTION

In many villages across Indonesia, women often stand at the forefront of supporting household economies, particularly when the primary source of income is insufficient or unstable (Hendratmi et al., 2022; Miranti et al., 2022). This is evident in Gampong Langung, a village in Meureubo Subdistrict, West Aceh Regency, where many housewives have started running home-based businesses centered on traditional cakes (Alhulaimi et al., 2025; Yuliana, 2023). These small enterprises not only provide additional income but also create space for women to become economically and socially empowered. Although seemingly simple, the enthusiasm behind these

home-based cake businesses reflects complex motivational dynamics: ranging from basic needs to the desire for self-actualization. However, not all entrepreneurs possess the same level of motivation, and these differences significantly affect the sustainability and growth of the businesses they manage.

This phenomenon is important to discuss because micro-enterprises like these hold great potential for supporting local economic development, particularly in rural areas that still face limited access to resources, training, and capital support. Yet, without a deep understanding of entrepreneurial motivation, empowerment programs often miss their targets. Field observations show that while some entrepreneurs grow rapidly and begin creating small job opportunities, others remain at the subsistence level or even cease operations due to a lack of drive. Therefore, this study aims to delve into what truly motivates women in Gampong Langung to continue—or abandon—their traditional cake-making ventures.

The study of women's motivation in micro-enterprises has been widely conducted. For instance, research by Nurasyiah et al. (2023), Soemitra et al. (2022), and Wahyu Hati & Syarifah (2023) shows that women micro-entrepreneurs in Indonesia are primarily driven by family economic needs. This is supported by studies from Andrean et al. (2022), Buvinic et al. (2022), and Setyaningrum et al. (2023), who found that economic pressures and spousal income uncertainty are key triggers for women's engagement in entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, Anggadwita et al. (2021) and Cakranegara et al. (2022) note that social aspects—such as the desire for community recognition—also influence women's entrepreneurial spirit, albeit to a lesser extent than economic factors.

On the other hand, Maslow's (1943) motivation theory has long been used to explain human behavior in work and entrepreneurial contexts. Its application in entrepreneurship studies is evident in works by Hairunisya et al. (2024), Setiawan et al. (2024), and Supatminingsih et al. (2025), who explored physiological to self-actualization needs as motivational foundations for MSME actors. These studies show that self-actualization needs tend to emerge once basic needs are relatively fulfilled. Similar views are expressed by Brieger et al. (2021) and Chatterjee et al. (2022), who state that entrepreneurs with a sense of economic security begin to seek deeper meaning in their work, such as personal fulfillment or social recognition.

Several other studies have attempted to link motivation with business success. Fahmi et al. (2023) found that entrepreneurs with high motivation levels tend to be more resilient when facing challenges. This is further supported by studies from Fauzi et al. (2025), Kussudyarsana et al. (2024), and Puspitasari & Ayustia (2025), who discovered that women with layered motivations—both economic and self-actualization—are more likely to grow their ventures into small-to-medium-scale enterprises. However, these studies generally focus on urban or semi-urban areas, where social contexts are more open and access to resources is better.

Research by Utami et al. (2023) and Yudiastuti et al. (2021), which focuses on female MSME entrepreneurs in East Java, shows that family support and social networks play significant roles in shaping entrepreneurial motivation. Another study by Anggadwita et al. (2023) and

Parvatiyar & Sheth (2023) highlights how training and government programs can enhance motivation, though only when aligned with the psychological needs and conditions of the entrepreneurs. In Aceh, however, studies examining women's motivations in traditional enterprises remain limited. Most literature, such as those by Andriani et al. (2024), Chikh-Amnache & Mekhzoumi (2024), and Heger & Neumayer (2022), tends to focus on macroeconomic structures or the impact of conflict on women's roles, without deeply exploring psychological aspects.

In the context of motivation and women's economic empowerment, there remains a scarcity of studies that specifically explore the relationship between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the motivation of female traditional cake entrepreneurs in rural Aceh. Especially with a quantitative approach that can systematically map the most dominant levels of need. Moreover, traditional enterprises such as local cake-making are often viewed as supplementary activities, rather than strategic study subjects that can reflect the dynamics of women's social transformation in rural areas.

It is within this gap that the current research positions itself. By focusing on the motivations of traditional cake entrepreneurs in Gampong Langung and linking them to the local socio-cultural context and the hierarchy of needs framework, this study aims to reinterpret the role of rural women in community-based economic development. Rather than viewing their ventures as mere economic survival strategies, this approach seeks to understand how seemingly simple businesses can serve as spaces for self-actualization, even if only at an embryonic stage.

The primary goal of this study is to describe the motivation levels of women traditional cake entrepreneurs in Gampong Langung and to identify the most dominant need-based factors driving them to engage in entrepreneurship. The study also aims to offer a sharper portrayal of women's motivational dynamics in the rural Acehese context, which has so far received limited attention. In this way, the research findings are expected to provide a foundation for formulating more adaptive and context-sensitive empowerment strategies—not only economically oriented but also addressing the psychological and social dimensions of grassroots female entrepreneurs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with descriptive analysis. A quantitative method is selected because the research aims to describe and measure the phenomenon of entrepreneurial motivation objectively based on numerical data that can be statistically analyzed. The nature of this study is not to test hypotheses or relationships between variables but to understand general patterns in the structure of needs that drive women's entrepreneurial activity in rural areas. Therefore, descriptive analysis is considered the most appropriate method to capture the social realities without imposing specific causal relationships (Ghanad, 2023; Taherdoost, 2022).

The selection of Gampong Langung, in Meureubo Subdistrict, West Aceh Regency, as the research site is deliberate. This village represents a compelling example of a community with local economic potential through home-based traditional cake businesses, almost entirely managed by women—especially housewives and fishermen’s wives. Within the context of community-based economic development, the role of women in this village deserves attention, as they conduct productive economic activities from home while also maintaining domestic roles within their families. The presence of these traditional cake businesses reflects women’s movement into the economic sphere, albeit informal, with significant impact on household stability and gradual social transformation.

Subjects in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that involves selecting respondents based on specific considerations relevant to the research focus (Robinson, 2023). In this case, the respondents were women who actively manage traditional cake-making businesses independently or as household enterprises. A total of ten respondents were selected. Although seemingly small, this number aligns with the characteristics of descriptive-exploratory research, which prioritizes contextual understanding over generalization (Taherdoost, 2022). All respondents were adult women, with an average age of 35 years, educational backgrounds ranging from elementary to high school, and business experience ranging from one to five years. This diversity enriched the collected data as it reflected varied experiences and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The main research instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements structured around Maslow’s five categories of needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Each category was represented by three specific statements that depicted aspects of the respective needs. The use of a Likert scale (with response options ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) enabled the researchers to systematically measure respondents’ attitudes, perceptions, and agreement levels (Ghanad, 2023). This scale was chosen for its flexibility in capturing nuanced individual responses to social phenomena.

Data collection was carried out in April 2025 through structured interviews conducted in person while respondents completed the questionnaire. In many cases, the researcher read the questions aloud due to some respondents’ limited literacy. This approach ensured consistency and equal understanding of each statement. Additionally, after the questionnaire was completed, the researcher conducted brief informal interviews with each respondent. These follow-up interviews aimed to gather concrete examples of respondents’ answers, thereby enhancing the quantitative results with narratives that explained the context behind their choices. This method kept the quantitative approach grounded in the social reality experienced by the research subjects.

To ensure data validity and strengthen interpretation, internal triangulation was conducted. This triangulation involved comparing the questionnaire results with the informal interview findings. Any discrepancies between questionnaire scores and respondents’ verbal

statements were recorded as field notes for further analysis. This technique is especially important in social research using standard instruments to capture phenomena that are often complex and contextually rooted (Ghanad, 2023). Additionally, narrative analysis from the interviews was used to deepen the understanding of how motivation is formed within the cultural and social context of Gampong Langung.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The first step involved calculating the mean and standard deviation for each statement. Then, for each category of need, the average was calculated from the three representative statements. These results were used to illustrate motivational tendencies at each level of need. Subsequently, the researcher calculated the overall average for all statements per respondent to determine each individual's level of motivation. Based on these averages, motivation levels were classified into three categories: low (1.00–2.33), medium (2.34–3.67), and high (3.68–5.00), calculated by dividing the Likert scale range into three equal intervals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile: Women Amid the Village's Economic Realities

In order to understand the motivational structure of female traditional cake entrepreneurs in Gampong Langung, it is crucial to first explore their socio-demographic background. The respondents' profiles offer more than numerical data—they reveal deeper social dimensions of their positions and roles within the community. All respondents in this study are women aged between 25 and 50 years. They are not only economic actors but also household managers who deal daily with domestic demands and the financial needs of their families. In rural communities, particularly in coastal areas like Gampong Langung, women often carry a double burden—caring for the home while also supporting the household economy through home-based productive activities.

The respondents' education levels vary, reflecting the persistent structural challenge of limited educational access in many Acehnese villages. Four respondents completed elementary school, three finished junior high school, and the remaining three graduated from high school. None of them received formal higher education. This educational limitation significantly affects their outlook on entrepreneurship and motivation to grow, as explained by Gurel et al. (2021) and Yoopetch (2021), who noted that education level strongly correlates with risk-taking capacity and entrepreneurial spirit, especially among women.

Economically, the cake businesses they run generate varying daily incomes, ranging from IDR 100,000 to IDR 1,000,000, depending on the season, production volume, and distribution network. The products reflect the richness of local culinary traditions, such as kue bawang, kue karah, and kue seupet—all deeply rooted in Acehnese cultural heritage. Although profits are not yet stable, these businesses serve as a vital pillar supporting household finances. In a community that largely depends on fishing or informal labor, home-based cake enterprises offer a more

flexible and sustainable economic alternative.

Table 1 Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Description
Number of respondents	10 women
Age range	25–50 years
Education level	Elementary (4), Junior High (3), High School (3)
Business duration	< 2 years (4), > 3 years (6)
Average daily income	IDR 100,000 – IDR 1,000,000
Business pattern	Home-based, supported by family, sold at home kiosks
Product types	Kue bawang, kue karah, kue seupet

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

In terms of business experience, six out of ten respondents have been in this line of work for more than three years. This group tends to be more confident and oriented toward long-term goals, while the remaining four are still beginners with less than two years of experience. Their businesses are generally home-based and involve family members—either in production or marketing. This highlights the collective dimension of women’s economic practices in rural areas. As noted by Jacob & Munuswamy (2022), family support is a key factor in the sustainability of women’s micro-enterprises in Southeast Asian rural regions.

The social reality of Gampong Langung as a coastal village also shapes the motivational dynamics of these entrepreneurs. Access to formal economic resources such as banking, entrepreneurship training, or modern market networks remains limited. Within these constraints, home-based cake production emerges as both a form of resistance and economic creativity, filling the gaps in household livelihood needs. These women build micro-economies rooted in tradition, with modest capital but strong resilience.

From this, we can understand that motivation does not arise in a vacuum. Rather, it grows within a landscape filled with structural challenges but also rich in social potential. This context affirms that motivational structures are heavily influenced by the objective conditions faced by rural women—from education and experience to social and cultural ties that shape their mindset and entrepreneurial drive.

Motivation Level Categories: Navigating Between Needs

The analysis of individual motivation scores reveals a diverse distribution among home-based entrepreneurs in Gampong Langung. Of the ten respondents, four (40%) fall into the high motivation category, another four (40%) into the medium category, and two (20%) into the low category. The average score for high motivation is ≥ 3.68 (close to “agree” on motivational statements), while the low category falls below ≤ 2.33 (close to “disagree”). This composition illustrates a spectrum of motivation among female small business owners in this coastal village—heterogeneous and shaped by needs, backgrounds, and access to social and economic resources.

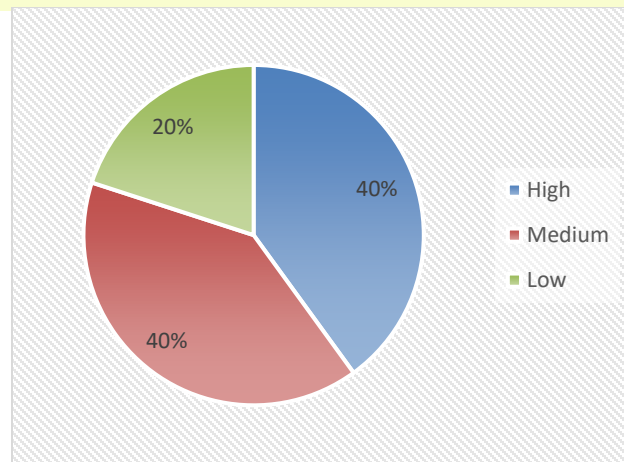


Figure 1 Distribution of business motivation levels
 Source: Processed by the author (2025)

The highly motivated group generally shares consistent characteristics, such as having more than three years of business experience, receiving emotional and labor support from family (e.g., help from children or spouses), and a tendency to expand their business beyond the village. Respondents in this category have often met their basic economic needs and feel more confident in their roles as home entrepreneurs. They also tend to have a long-term vision for their business, such as ambitions to market via social media or create product variations.

Meanwhile, the medium motivation group displays ambivalence. On one hand, they acknowledge that their business brings certain economic and social benefits, such as increased income and social interaction. On the other hand, they are not fully willing to take risks or lack a clear long-term vision. This group generally comprises newer entrepreneurs (less than two years) who are still finding stable work patterns or are limited by lack of access to information and training. Their scores in the social and esteem categories are moderate, indicating that while the business offers some recognition, their main goal remains economic stability.

The low motivation group exhibits a different dynamic. Their business engagement is driven more by urgent needs than intrinsic motivation to grow. Two respondents in this category revealed during interviews that lack of time due to domestic responsibilities, fear of failure, and lack of spousal support are their main barriers. One respondent mentioned only producing cakes upon receiving orders and was too afraid to keep stock for fear it would not sell. This phenomenon aligns with findings by Duong & Vu (2024) and Sousa-Filho et al. (2023), which emphasize that fear of failure can reduce entrepreneurial intention and hinder decision-making. Low self-confidence is also a significant factor preventing innovation or expansion. This reinforces the idea that motivation is not purely individual, but closely tied to environmental support, household economic conditions, and perceived risk.

To provide a more systematic comparison, the following table summarizes the characteristics of each motivation category based on field observations.

Table 2 Respondent Motivation Categorization

Motivation Category	Respondent Proportion	Key Characteristics	Challenges	Sources of Support
High	40% (4 individuals)	>3 years' experience, confident, long-term goals	Market access	Family, community, social media
Medium	40% (4 individuals)	<3 years, fairly enthusiastic, risk-averse	Unstable production	Limited social environment
Low	20% (2 individuals)	Time-constrained, fear of failure, compelled motivation	Domestic burden, low confidence	Not significant

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

This motivational distribution illustrates that individuals' capacity for motivation is closely related to their ability to access and leverage social and economic resources. In the context of Gampong Langung—a coastal village with limited access to formal economic facilities—female home-based entrepreneurs must rely on local resources such as social networks, family support, and micro-capital. The absence of such resources correlates directly with lower levels of motivation, as seen in the two respondents in the low category.

Theoretically, these findings confirm that motivation is not solely determined by psychological factors but also by the socio-economic structures surrounding individuals (Maslow, 1943). In this context, motivation can be seen as the result of the interaction between internal needs and external opportunities. Entrepreneurs with more supportive social environments tend to reach higher levels of motivation—esteem or even self-actualization—as seen in respondents who begin to view their business as a personal legacy.

Conversely, when household economic conditions remain unstable or social support is lacking, motivation tends to stagnate at the level of basic needs. Therefore, intervention strategies to enhance motivation cannot be one-size-fits-all. Empowerment efforts for women MSME entrepreneurs in villages like Langung must be designed in stages—starting by ensuring the fulfillment of physiological and safety needs through programs like capital assistance, then creating community forums and training opportunities to help entrepreneurs feel valued and grow personally (Ayalu et al., 2023; Cacciotti et al., 2016).

Structure of Needs: From Survival to Self-Esteem

Quantitative findings from this study show that the motivational structure of home-based cake entrepreneurs in Gampong Langung is still heavily influenced by basic needs, as reflected in the highest scores in the categories of physiological needs (average 4.1) and safety (average 4.0). This indicates that the primary motivation of these entrepreneurs is to meet daily living necessities, such as food, clothing, and family financial stability. Most respondents stated that the income from their cake business is used to buy rice, pay for their children's education, and cover kitchen expenses, reflecting the economic pressures that compel them to engage in entrepreneurship. In an interview, one respondent said, "If I don't sell, it's not enough for daily

expenses. Sometimes my husband can't go fishing because of the weather, so I have to earn extra." This affirms that their motivation is a push factor—driven by necessity rather than the attraction of business opportunities (Cheng et al., 2024).

The need for safety also serves as a strong trigger for running a business. Several respondents expressed feeling more economically secure because they had their own income and were not entirely dependent on their husband's unstable earnings. This aligns with Maslow (1943), who argued that the need for safety is foundational before individuals can pursue social needs or self-actualization. Additionally, the perspective of Moller & Deci (2023) reinforces the idea that once basic needs are met, individuals begin to seek competence and autonomy, which in turn foster intrinsic motivation. In other words, these businesses not only serve economic needs but also act as a bridge toward deeper personal growth.

Furthermore, social and esteem needs were rated at a moderate level, with average scores of 3.7 and 3.5, respectively. Although not yet dominant, these figures indicate the emerging desire for social recognition and pride in personal achievements. Some respondents expressed happiness when neighbors or friends praised their cakes or when orders increased through word-of-mouth. In a socially close-knit village context, such motivation becomes important, as community support—through social gatherings, women's organizations (PKK), or fellow cake sellers—can encourage business sustainability. This is supported by Tirumalaisamy et al. (2024), who found that social support significantly influences the performance of micro-entrepreneurs.

It's important to note that esteem needs are not always expressed through formal status or financial gains but rather through recognition and enhanced self-worth. One respondent said, "At first I was shy, but now I'm happy because people like my cakes. I feel more confident." This signals that their business has become a new source of identity—not just as a housewife but also as a female entrepreneur. In the long term, this can lay the foundation for the emergence of self-actualization motivations.

Although self-actualization needs had the lowest average score (3.0), they should not be overlooked. In fact, this category serves as a key indicator of an emerging psychological transformation. Two respondents with high scores in this aspect had been running their businesses for a long time and had started exploring new areas such as recipe innovation and digital marketing. One even admitted to finding deeper meaning in life through the business: "I didn't know I could make all kinds of cakes. Now I keep having new ideas, and I'm happy when people enjoy them." This indicates the emergence of an intrinsic drive to grow, create, and become the best version of themselves, as described in Maslow's highest level of the hierarchy of needs.

Moreover, Self-Determination Theory explains that intrinsic motivation grows when individuals feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2023). In this context, as economic and social needs begin to be met, the needs for competence and self-actualization start to gain space. Thus, entrepreneurial motivation is not static but evolves as

more fundamental needs are fulfilled.

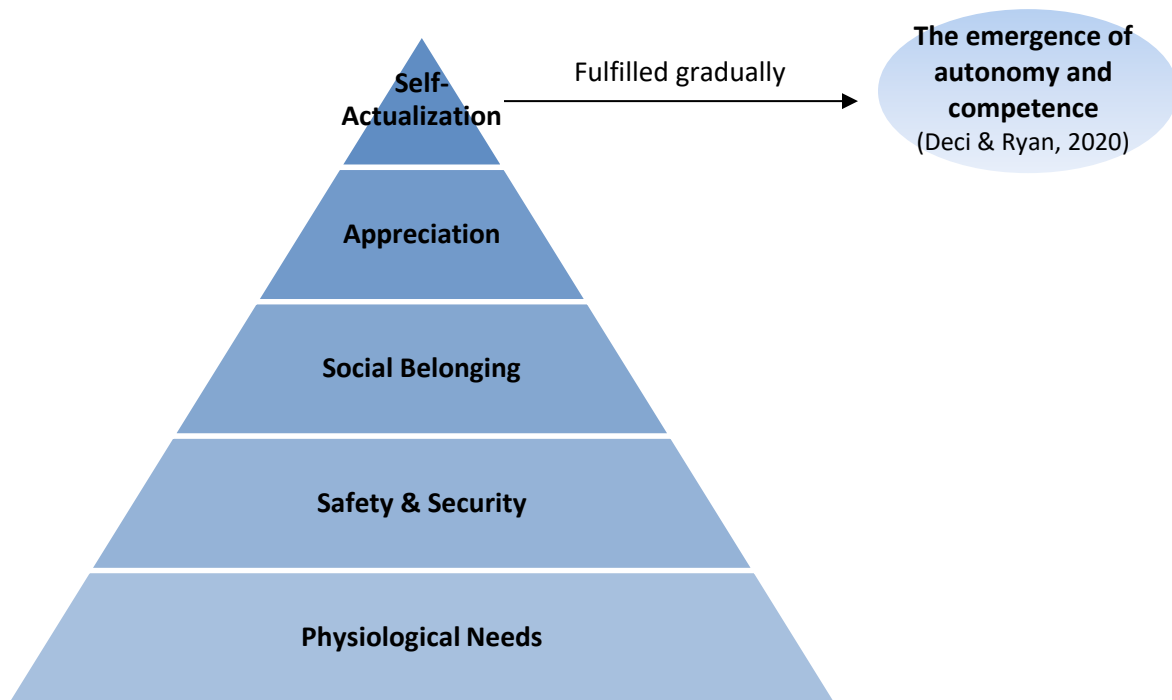


Figure 2 Pyramid of Needs Structure and Women's Entrepreneurial Motivation

Source: Processed by the author (2025)

The findings of this study show that the motivation of women entrepreneurs in Gampong Langung exists in a dynamic interplay between the fulfillment of basic needs and the aspiration for self-development. Although it begins with the stomach, the seeds of self-esteem and actualization are beginning to grow. If supported by affirmative policies and an appropriate empowerment ecosystem, this psychological transformation could become a foundation for sustainable village economic growth. This aligns with Wagana's (2024) argument on the importance of cross-sectoral synergy in empowering rural women micro-entrepreneurs.

Motivation as a Catalyst for Women's Social Transformation

Economic motivation based on basic needs—the drive to meet daily necessities—does not stop at filling stomachs and wallets, but gradually becomes a catalyst for broader social transformation among women in Gampong Langung. In this context, home-based activities such as cake production and sales are not merely economic pursuits, but gateways for women to enter the public economic sphere, which was previously dominated by men. The emergence of productive roles outside the domestic domain shows that necessity-driven motivation has opened the door to new forms of female independence.

This research reveals that women's involvement in cake entrepreneurship contributes not only to family income but also to shifting their social identities. Some respondents, who previously saw themselves only as "housewives," have begun identifying as "small entrepreneurs," "cake sellers," or even "women who earn their own income." This is not a trivial

change, as identity holds powerful symbolic significance in shaping social roles and power relations within communities. As Setyaningrum et al. (2023) suggest, women's empowerment occurs when they gain access to resources, have a voice in decision-making, and are able to reconstruct their identity within a broader social structure.

This transformation is also evident in the growing desire to expand businesses, build customer networks, and experiment with new product variants—all early signs of a self-actualization process that is not yet mature but has clearly begun. For example, one respondent shared her dream of owning her own cake shop, rather than merely selling from home. Although this ambition is still limited by capital and market access, such a statement indicates an important imaginative leap: from survival to future creation. It shows that women's motivation in home-based businesses is not static but moves in a dialectic between needs and hopes, experience and reflection.

Cake entrepreneurship, in this sense, becomes a symbol of independence born from necessity, but which does not stop at fulfilling practical needs. It has become a medium for women to demonstrate competence, build new social relationships beyond their households, and negotiate their roles within the village's social structure. Over time, the kitchen—which was once considered a private, domestic space—has transformed into a socially valued economic production space. In other words, the kitchen has become a transformative arena, where women reshape their roles and social relations.

Motivation, in this context, is not a fixed point, but a process in continuous transformation. It cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and economic context in which these women live. Contemporary motivation theories, such as those described by Ryan & Deci (2023) in Self-Determination Theory, assert that motivation develops dynamically when individuals feel autonomous, competent, and socially connected. Therefore, when rural women begin to feel capable of earning income, appreciated by their communities, and able to make life choices, the seeds of social transformation are already taking root.

Furthermore, women's motivation in home-based businesses also becomes a meeting point between personal interests and collective values. The desire to support the family's finances, educate children, or avoid burdening their husbands is often cited as the main reason for doing business. Yet behind this lies a deeper urge to gain control over their own lives—a form of organic emancipation, not born from ideological doctrines. This is consistent with Brieger et al. (2021), who found that rural women entrepreneurs in Indonesia often undergo a social identity shift from “dependent” to “decision-maker” through sustainable microeconomic activity.

Theoretical and Practical Implications: Restructuring Empowerment Strategies

The findings of this study provide significant contributions to revising our understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly within the context of rural women. In Maslow's original framework (1943), the hierarchy of needs is structured in a linear sequence—from physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, to self-actualization. However, empirical

data from the women of Gampong Langung reveal that their motivational structure does not strictly follow this linear progression. In their daily practices, basic needs (such as food, income, and family security) coexist with social and esteem-related needs. These women do not wait until their basic needs are fully met before seeking recognition or feeling pride in their work. This illustrates that motivation is contextual, dynamic, and deeply influenced by local socio-cultural realities.

For example, many women began selling cakes to support their household needs, but along the way, they also began to build new social networks, experience a growing sense of self-confidence, and even receive recognition from their communities. Rather than viewing motivation as a one-way ladder, it is more accurate to understand it as an interactive web of needs—where one dimension can reinforce another. This aligns with contemporary critiques of Maslow, such as those presented by Papaleontiou–Louca et al. (2022), who argue that the order of hierarchy is not universal, but highly dependent on social and cultural contexts.

The following diagram illustrates how rural women’s motivational structure is non-linear, but interconnected in a contextual web of needs:

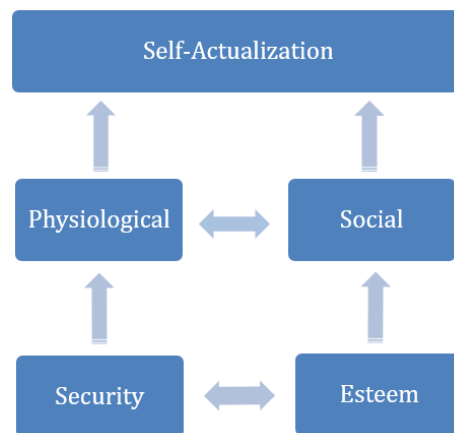


Figure 3 Motivational Structure of Rural Women in a Contextual, Interconnected Web of Needs
Source: Processed by the author (2025)

In this diagram, two-way arrows indicate reciprocal interactions between levels of need. For instance, success in fulfilling social needs—such as support from cake seller groups—can enhance self-esteem, even when physiological stability has not been fully achieved.

The practical implication of these findings is the need for more flexible and contextually responsive empowerment strategies. Community-based economic programs often place too much emphasis on technical training or capital assistance without addressing the motivational and psychological dimensions that accompany women’s journey toward becoming economic actors. Yet, as evidenced in this study, support for esteem (such as social recognition and celebration of small successes) and self-actualization (such as spaces for expression and innovation) is critical to shaping independent and creative rural women.

Mapping motivations is not only valuable academically, but also serves as a tool for designing more effective social interventions. Empowerment strategies should not be one-size-fits-all, but should be tailored according to each individual's or group's motivational starting point. As Villanueva Ulfgard (2023) affirms, effective empowerment is rooted in people-centered development—an approach that places community experiences and aspirations at the heart of intervention. These findings underscore the importance of integrating classical theoretical approaches with a grounded, contextual understanding. Rather than discarding old theories, we can reconfigure them to better suit the contemporary realities of rural women. Empowerment processes require not only economic strategies but also a deep understanding of the accompanying psychological dynamics. For in every small business run by the hands of rural women lies a larger narrative of dignity, struggle, and the hope for a more empowered future.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study reveals that the motivations of women engaged in traditional cake businesses in Gampong Langung are not solely rooted in economic necessity, but evolve into a complex and dynamic process of social identity transformation. While their primary drive remains anchored in fulfilling physiological and safety needs, strong indications of emerging social, esteem, and even self-actualization motivations suggest that traditional cake-making has become a transformative space—shifting from a purely domestic activity to a platform for independence and self-expression. These findings fulfill the research objective by affirming that the motivational structure of rural women is contextual and does not always follow the linear path illustrated in Maslow's theory; instead, it forms a web-like pattern of interrelated needs. In this context, the study's novelty lies in its localized mapping of motivation structures, enriching our understanding of rural women's empowerment in a more holistic manner. Thus, intervention strategies that are adaptive to various levels of needs—from economic support to encouragement for personal expression and innovation—are essential to fostering sustainable motivational growth and accelerating the social transformation of women within rural community-based economies..

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to

the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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