Beyond Fields and Families: Unraveling Socio-demographic Threads in CSA Engagement of Indonesian Market

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Abstract

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) promotes sustainable farming through direct producer-consumer relationships but remains underutilized in Indonesia. This study examines socio-demographic factors influencing CSA participation among 385 Indonesian nonparticipants and emphasizes communication's role in overcoming engagement barriers. Findings reveal urban residents and larger households are more likely to join CSA due to better information access and convenience. Income has a near-significant impact, while education shows no effect, highlighting awareness gaps. Strategic communication campaigns targeting urban areas, affordable memberships for low-income groups, and educational initiatives can increase CSA participation. Policymakers should integrate CSA into urban planning, leveraging communication to address risk perceptions and build trust. Future research should explore cultural attitudes and digital platforms' influence to strengthen Indonesia's sustainable agriculture.

Keywords: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA); Socio-demographic factors; Consumer behavior; Risk communication; Sustainable agriculture.

Introduction

Growing concerns about the detrimental impacts of global food systems have prompted many individuals to seek sustainable alternatives that support local communities, engage directly with farmers, promote healthier diets, and reduce environmental footprints (Hoang, 2021; Marotta et al., 2017; Stanco et al., 2019). Among the rising social movements addressing these challenges, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has emerged as a prominent model worldwide. CSA programs bridge the gap between consumers and farmers by fostering direct relationships that prioritize social, economic, and environmental sustainability (Diekmann & Theuvsen, 2019; Hvitsand, 2016; Mert-Cakal & Miele, 2020). Through a subscription-based system, consumers receive fresh produce regularly, while supporting environmentally responsible farming practices (Brown & Miller, 2008; Medici et al., 2021). This creative strategy strengthens the local food system and creates a more robust and sustainable supply chain.

CSA's unique approach addresses critical issues in traditional agriculture, including food insecurity, income instability for small-scale farmers, and environmental degradation (Chen et al., 2019; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2017). By providing diverse, nutrient-rich food, these programs preserve regional food traditions and mitigate the environmental impact of industrialized agriculture (Matzembacher & Meira, 2019; Samoggia et al., 2019). Beyond economic and ecological benefits, CSA fosters educational opportunities by allowing members to engage directly with farming activities, strengthening trust and community bonds (Hayden & Buck, 2012; Zoll et al., 2022). For CSA members, this becomes a fun family outing. Activities involving CSA members demonstrate openness and mutual trust between both sides (Mert-Cakal & Miele, 2020; Zoll et al., 2022). Members of the CSA are willing to pay more for their products because of this extra value that comes from the experience (Wang et al., 2015).

While CSA's core principles remain consistent globally, its implementation varies based on local contexts, tailoring to unique geographic, market, and cultural dynamics (Volz et al., 2016). Despite its adaptability and potential for transformative impact, CSA participation remains limited in Indonesia due to low awareness and communication barriers. As an agrarian nation, understanding the socio-demographic

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factors influencing CSA adoption is crucial to advancing sustainable agriculture practices and addressing food system vulnerabilities (Ansari & Khan, 2018; Mazhar et al., 2017).

This study will delve into the socio-demographic that shape interest in CSA programs among nonparticipants in Indonesia. By exploring variables such as income, household size, education, and urban/rural origin, it aims to uncover barriers and opportunities for CSA engagement. Findings from this research will guide practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders in designing effective communication strategies to expand CSA participation and promote sustainable food systems in Indonesia.

Literature Review

Consumer behavior theory provides a framework for understanding decision-making processes, including factors influencing the choice, purchase, and use of products and services (Mowen & Minor, 2002; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997). Key models, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), suggest that consumer intentions—shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—predict actual behavior. This perspective has been instrumental in exploring decisions related to food selection and environmental sustainability.

Consumer preferences in organic farming often reflect health consciousness, environmental concerns, and social influences (Chen et al., 2014; Hughner et al., 2007). Organic product buyers are typically middle to upper-income individuals, predominantly female, and older in age. These demographics prioritize health benefits, the perceived safety of organic products, and more nutritious than conventionally produced alternatives (Chen et al., 2014; Hughner et al., 2007; Mitić & Čolović, 2022). Younger consumers, however, increasingly view organic purchases as aligned with environmental and social values (Basha et al., 2015; Nafees et al., 2022). Trust in organic certifications and labels further impacts purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of perceived authenticity (Thøgersen, 2011; Nafees et al., 2022).

Trust in organic labels and certification processes is an important factor influencing consumer propensity to buy organic products (Fatha & Ayoubi, 2023; Majhi, 2022; Nafees et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2022). Thøgersen (2011) found that consumers are more satisfied and loyal to organic products when they see value in terms of quality, health advantages, and environmental effects. Nafees et al. (2022) also claimed that people who eat organic food for health reasons are pragmatic types who highly emphasize performance and utility when making purchases. Meanwhile, people who eat organic food for environmental reasons are typically socialists who stress their looks in the eyes of others. They are less likely to buy organic food but more likely to buy local food. Understanding these behavioral characteristics is critical for promoting organic farming and increasing consumer involvement in environmentally friendly farming practices.

CSA introduces a novel dimension to sustainable agriculture by directly connecting consumers with local producers (European CSA Research Group, 2016). This approach, centered on shared risks and rewards, enhances transparency and fosters trust within the supply chain (Cone & Myhre, 2000; Georgieva et al., 2022). Participants are motivated by access to fresh, high-quality produce, support for local farmers, and environmentally sustainable practices. Moreover, CSA fosters community engagement through events, farm tours, and volunteer opportunities, enriching the consumer experience and promoting behavioral changes, such as increased fruit and vegetable consumption and greater environmental awareness (Seguin et al., 2017; White et al., 2018). These indicate that CSA not only promotes individual health and local economies but also helps to promote more sustainable purchasing choices. However, the adoption and success of CSA programs can differ greatly depending on regional circumstances and customer demographics (Hvitsand, 2016).

Research underscores the significance of socio-demographic factors in shaping CSA involvement. Higher income levels often facilitate participation due to affordability, while education enhances awareness of CSA's environmental and health benefits (Chen et al., 2019; Pole & Gray, 2013). Household size also plays a role; families with children tend to favor CSA for its variety and nutritional value (Ostrom, 2007; Shi et al., 2011). Conversely, smaller households or individuals without children may participate due to greater flexibility (Galt et al., 2017).

Geographic origin further impacts participation. Urban residents, with better access to information and delivery infrastructure, are more likely to join CSA programs compared to rural individuals, who may perceive logistical and cost barriers (Cotter et al., 2017; McGuirt et al., 2020). These findings emphasize the need for targeted outreach strategies tailored to specific demographics and regions. Based on the above literature review, the following conceptual framework is proposed:



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: elaborated by the authors (2024)

- H1: Higher income levels are positively correlated with increased CSA participation.
- H2: Individuals with higher education levels are more likely to engage in CSA programs.
- H3: Urban residents are more likely to participate in CSA than rural residents.
- H4: Household size has a significant impact on CSA participation.

Despite extensive studies in Western contexts, CSA research in non-Western, developing nations remains limited. Most existing literature focuses on North America and Europe, overlooking the unique socioeconomic and agricultural dynamics of countries like Indonesia. Additionally, few studies explore the combined influence of multiple socio-demographic factors or consider non-participants' perspectives. Addressing these gaps is crucial for designing inclusive CSA initiatives that resonate with diverse populations.

This study bridges these gaps by analyzing socio-demographic influences on CSA participation among nonmembers in Indonesia. By leveraging rigorous statistical methods and focusing on a culturally distinct setting, it seeks to contribute actionable insights for expanding CSA programs and advancing sustainable agriculture.

Methodology

This study utilized socio-demographic data from a diverse sample of Indonesian consumers who had not participated in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. Data collection occurred in January and February 2023, involving 385 respondents selected based on criteria ensuring a representative demographic. Eligibility criteria included individuals aged 20 to 50 with at least a high school diploma, active internet usage, and a basic understanding of CSA principles. These criteria align with previous research on CSA participation and reflect the requirements for engaging in digitally supported CSA programs (Chen et al., 2019; Furness et al., 2022; Galt et al., 2017).

Participants were provided with an introductory explanation of CSA's definition, operational principles, and benefits to ensure informed responses. They were then asked about their willingness to participate in CSA programs. Data collection focused on socio-demographic variables, including age, income, education level, household size, and urban/rural origins. These variables were categorized as follows:

1. Ages were divided into five categories: 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, and 40-50 years.

2. Income levels were classified into three categories based on monthly household income: less than IDR 1,200,000, IDR 1,200,001 - 5,999,999, and IDR 6,000,000 or beyond.

3. Educational levels were divided into four categories: junior high school diploma, senior high school diploma, undergraduate degree, and postgraduate degree.

4. Household size was divided into three categories: singles/not married, married without children, and married with children.

5. Participants were also divided into two groups based on where they lived: urban residents and rural residents..

Following data collection, statistical analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between sociodemographic characteristics and interest in CSA participation. The Chi-square test, a non-parametric statistical method, was employed to identify significant associations between categorical variables. SPSS software facilitated data processing and analysis, enabling the identification of meaningful patterns and insights.

The Chi-square analysis provided critical insights into how socio-demographic factors influence CSA participation likelihood. This robust methodology ensured the data's reliability and representativeness, offering a comprehensive understanding of the socio-demographic dynamics at play in CSA engagement. These findings inform targeted strategies to address barriers and enhance CSA adoption among diverse population segments.

Results

a. Demographic profiles

The demographic profiles of 385 general Indonesian consumers asked about their interest in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs provide useful information about future CSA participants. The primary demographic characteristics examined are income, education level, household size, and urban/rural origin.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender		2	
Male	196	50.9%	
Female	189	49.1%	
Total	385	100.0%	
Age			
20 to 24 years	85	22.1	
25 to 29 years	111	28.8	
30 to 34 years	105	37.3	
35 to 39 years	75	19.5	
40 to 50 years	9	2.3	
Total	385	100.0%	
Income			

Table 1. Demographic Profiles of Respondent

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		https://ecohumanism.co.uk/joe/ecohumanism
		DOI: https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.5538
Less than IDR 1,200,000	212	55.1
IDR 1,200,001 - 5,999,999	133	34.5
IDR 6,000,000 and beyond	40	10.4
Total	385	100.0%
Education		
Junior High School Diploma	2	0.5
Senior High School Diploma	155	40.3
Undergraduate Degree	210	54.5
Postgraduate Degree	18	4.7
Total	385	100.0%
Origin		
Rural Residents	68	17.7
Urban Residents	317	82.3
Total	385	100.0%
Household size		
Single	324	84.2
Married without Children	18	4.7
Married with Children	43	11.2
Total	385	100.0%

Source: elaborated by the authors (2024)

The demographic profiles (Table 1) provide a comprehensive overview of the 385 Indonesian respondents surveyed, reflecting diverse socioeconomic characteristics. The gender distribution is nearly balanced, with 50.9% male and 49.1% female participants. Respondents were drawn from various regions across Indonesia, including East Java, West Java, Central Java, South Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, North Sumatra, Central Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, West Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Aceh, Jambi, and Bali.

Age distribution trends skew toward younger adults, with the largest group (37.3%) aged 30 to 34 years, followed by 28.8% aged 25 to 29 years and 22.1% aged 20 to 24 years. Smaller proportions include those aged 35 to 39 years (19.5%) and 40 to 50 years (2.3%).

Income levels reveal that over half of the respondents (55.1%) earn less than IDR 1,200,000 per month, while 34.5% fall within the IDR 1,200,001 to 5,999,999 range, and 10.4% earn IDR 6,000,000 or more monthly. Education levels are predominantly high, with 54.5% holding undergraduate degrees, 40.3% having senior high school diplomas, 4.7% possessing postgraduate qualifications, and 0.5% with junior high school diplomas.

In terms of household size, the majority (84.2%) are single, 11.2% are married with children, and 4.7% are married without children. The majority of respondents reside in urban areas (82.3%), while a smaller proportion (17.7%) are from rural locations.

These demographic insights underscore the predominance of younger, urban, single adults with higher education levels and varying income brackets in the sample. This distribution highlights key socio-demographic factors potentially influencing interest and participation in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs.

b. The Chi-square Test Results

The Chi-square test was used to investigate the correlations between these socio-demographic characteristics and the desire to participate in CSA activities. The analysis was carried out using SPSS software, which made it easier to process massive datasets and generate appropriate statistical results.

			Strongly Not Agree	Not Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Income	Less than IDR	Count	6	61	122	23	212
	1,200,000	% within income	2.8%	28.8%	57.5%	10.8%	100.0%
	IDR 1,200,000 -	Count	7	24	77	25	133
	5,999,999	% within income	5.3%	18.0%	57.9%	18.8%	100.0%
	IDR 6,000,000	Count	1	9	20	10	40
	and beyond	% within income	2.5%	22.5%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	14	94	219	58	385
		% within income	3.6%	24.4%	56.9%	15.1%	100.0%

Table 2. Crosstab Result of Income

Source: elaborated by the authors (2024)

The Chi-Square test for income and interest in CSA participation revealed a close-to-significant relationship, partially confirming H1. The findings are summarized in Table 2. Participants with an income of less than IDR 1,200,000 reported that 2.8% strongly disagreed, 28.8% disagreed, 57.5% agreed, and 10.8% strongly agreed to participate in CSA programs. Among those earning between IDR 1,200,000 and 5,999,999, 5.3% strongly disagreed, 18.0% disagreed, 57.9% agreed, and 18.8% highly agree. Participants earning more than IDR 6,000,000 were divided as follows: 2.5% strongly disagreed, 22.5% disagreed, 50.0% agreed, and 25.0% strongly agreed. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 12.134 with 6 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .059 suggests a close-to-significant relationship between income and interest in CSA participation.

Table 3. Crosst	ab Result	of Education
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			Strongly Not Agree	Not Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Education	Junior	Count	0	0	1	1	2
	High School	% within education	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Senior	Count	6	49	82	18	155
	High School	% within education	3.9%	31.6%	52.9%	11.6%	100.0%
	Under-	Count	7	42	128	33	210
	graduate	% within education	3.3%	20.0%	61.0%	15.7%	100.0%
	Post-	Count	1	3	8	6	18
	graduate	% within education	5.6%	16.7%	44.4%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	14	94	219	58	385
		% within education	3.6%	24.4%	56.9%	15.1%	100.0%

Source: elaborated by the authors (2024)

The Chi-Square test for education level and interest in CSA participation showed no significant results, ruling out H2. The findings are summarized in Table 3. Participants with a Junior High School diploma indicated that 0% strongly disagreed and disagreed, 50% agreed, and 50% strongly agreed to

participate in CSA activities. Among those with a Senior High School certificate, 3.9% severely disagreed, 31.6% disagreed, 52.9% agreed, and 11.6% strongly agreed. Among participants with an undergraduate degree, 3.3% strongly disagreed, 20.0% disagreed, 61.0% agreed, and 15.7% strongly agreed. Among those with a postgraduate degree, 5.6% severely disagreed, 16.7% disagreed, 44.4% agreed, and 33.3% strongly agreed. The Pearson Chi-Square score was 14.670 with 9 degrees of freedom (p-value =.100), suggesting no significant relationship exists between educational level and interest in CSA participation.

Strongly Not Strongly Total Agree Not Agree Agree Agree Origin Urban 170 317 Count 13 82 52 $\frac{9}{0}$ within 4.1% 25.9% 53.6% 16.4% 100.0% origin Rural Count 1 12 49 6 68 $\frac{9}{0}$ within 1.5% 17.6% 72.1% 8.8%100.0% origin Total 14 94 219 58 385 Count % within 3.6% 24.4% 56.9% 15.1% 100.0% origin

Table 4. Crosstab Result of Origin

Source: elaborated by the authors (2024)

The Chi-Square test for urban/rural origin and interest in CSA participation revealed a significant relationship, supporting H3 (Table 4). The cross-tabulation results show that among residents of cities, 4.1% highly disagreed, 25.9% disagreed, 53.6% agreed, and 16.4% strongly agreed to participate in CSA. For rural residents, 1.5% severely disagreed, 17.6% disagreed, 72.1% agreed, and 8.8% agreed. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 8.094 with three degrees of freedom and a p-value of .044 suggests a significant relationship between urban/rural origin and interest in CSA participation.

Table 5. Crosstab Result of Household Size

			Strongly Not Agree	Not Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
House-	Single	Count	14	88	184	38	324
hold Size	-	% within					
		household	4.3%	27.2%	56.8%	11.7%	100.0%
		size					
	Married	Count	0	1	13	4	18
	without	% within					
	children	household	0.0%	5.6%	72.2%	22.2%	100.0%
		size					
	Married	Count	0	5	22	16	43
	with	% within					
	children	household	0.0%	11.6%	51.2%	37.2%	100.0%
		size					
Total		Count	14	94	219	58	385
		% within					
		household	3.6%	24.4%	56.9%	15.1%	100.0%
		size					

Source: elaborated by the authors (2024)

Household size and interest in CSA participation also strongly correlate, supporting hypothesis 4. According to Table 5, 4.3% of single participants severely disagreed, 27.2% did not agree, 56.8% agreed, and 11.7% highly agreed. Among married couples without children, 0.0% strongly disagreed, 5.6% disagreed, 72.2% agreed, and 22.2% strongly agreed. Among married people with children, 0.0% strongly disagreed, 11.6% did not agree, 51.2% agreed, and 37.2% highly agreed. The Pearson Chi-Square value of 27.133, with 6 degrees of freedom and a p-value =.000, demonstrates a significant relationship between household size and interest in CSA participation.

In conclusion, the Chi-Square test results show substantial relationships between urban/rural origin, household size, and interest in CSA participation, supporting H3 and H4. Furthermore, income showed a close to substantial relationship, partially confirming H1. There was no substantial correlation with education level, hence H2 was not supported. These data indicate that urban location and household size are significant determinants impacting interest in CSA participation, emphasizing the necessity of targeting these demographic groups to increase CSA engagement.

Discussion

Interest in alternative and sustainable agricultural approaches, such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), has been growing globally. While CSA is not yet widely adopted in Indonesia, this study underscores its potential as a viable solution to food insecurity and environmental challenges. By exploring sociodemographic influences, this research builds on previous studies and offers new insights into CSA engagement among non-participants in Indonesia

Key Findings and Implications

This study identifies young urban adults aged 20 to 34, who are predominantly single and well-educated, as the demographic most interested in CSA participation. These findings align with prior research (Galt et al., 2017; Schnell, 2013; Tang et al., 2019), which highlights the appeal of CSA among young, active, urban populations. Notably, the interest among rural respondents also signals opportunities to expand CSA initiatives beyond urban areas by addressing logistical and cost barriers specific to rural contexts.

The significant relationship between urban residency and CSA participation reflects urban residents' access to information, infrastructure, and sustainable food practices (Hvitsand, 2016; Mert-Cakal & Miele, 2020). Urban environments facilitate engagement with CSA through farmers' markets, community activities, and digital platforms, which are less prevalent in rural areas. Policymakers and CSA organizers can leverage these advantages by tailoring outreach efforts to urban populations while exploring targeted strategies for rural areas, such as promoting local agricultural traditions and supporting community-led projects.

Household Size and CSA Engagement

Larger households, especially those with children, are more likely to participate in CSA programs due to their focus on nutritious and fresh food options. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing CSA's role in meeting families' dietary needs (Chen et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2011). Regular delivery of diverse produce reduces shopping trips and ensures a consistent supply of healthy food, making CSA an attractive option for larger families. Marketing strategies should emphasize these benefits to appeal to this demographic.

Income and Affordability

Although income had only a near-significant relationship with CSA participation, higher-income groups were more likely to engage, consistent with findings by Chen et al. (2019) and Diekmann & Theuvsen (2019). These individuals may view CSA as a symbol of environmental and social responsibility. However, middle- and low-income groups also expressed interest, particularly if membership costs are reasonable. This indicates a need for affordable CSA models that highlight long-term value and cost savings, especially for budget-conscious households. Subsidized memberships or sliding-scale fees could broaden participation across income brackets.

Education and Awareness

Contrary to expectations, education level did not significantly influence CSA participation, diverging from studies linking higher education to greater environmental awareness (Chen et al., 2019; Pole & Gray, 2013). In Indonesia, limited awareness of CSA programs may explain this result. Even highly educated individuals may lack exposure to CSA due to its nascent presence in the country. This highlights the critical need for educational campaigns and public awareness initiatives to bridge knowledge gaps.

Communication Strategies

Effective communication is pivotal in overcoming barriers to CSA engagement. Urban-focused outreach using digital platforms, social media, and community events can enhance awareness among tech-savvy demographics. Simultaneously, rural campaigns should emphasize the preservation of local traditions and the direct benefits to farmers and communities. Trust-building measures, such as transparent operations and regular updates, can further enhance CSA's appeal. Additionally, educational programs targeting diverse groups, including those with lower education levels, can dispel misconceptions and promote CSA's value.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's findings are insightful but not without limitations. The sample, while diverse, may not fully represent Indonesia's broader population, limiting generalizability. Self-reported data may also introduce biases, such as social desirability. Future studies should employ larger, more representative samples and objective measures to validate findings. Moreover, cultural attitudes, prior CSA experiences, and the role of digital platforms warrant further investigation. Innovative CSA models tailored to Indonesia's unique urban and rural contexts could provide valuable insights for scaling sustainable agriculture.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the socio-demographic factors influencing Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) participation in Indonesia, where CSA programs remain in their early stages. The findings reveal that urban residency and household size are significant determinants of CSA engagement, while income shows a near-significant effect. Urban residents and larger households are more inclined to participate due to better access to information, logistical convenience, and health benefits associated with fresh, locally produced food. Importantly, the appeal of CSA is not limited to higher-income groups, as middle- and low-income households also express interest when memberships are affordable, emphasizing the importance of cost-effective models.

Contrary to prior assumptions, education level did not significantly impact CSA participation, highlighting the need for widespread awareness campaigns to bridge knowledge gaps across all educational backgrounds. Policymakers and CSA organizers should prioritize urban-focused strategies, develop family-oriented marketing approaches, and integrate CSA programs into urban planning initiatives. Additionally, financial incentives and subsidies could further encourage diverse demographic groups to participate.

Future research should address the limitations of this study by employing larger, more representative samples and exploring additional factors, such as cultural attitudes, prior CSA experiences, and the role of digital platforms. These efforts will advance understanding of CSA dynamics and contribute to the design of inclusive, sustainable agricultural systems that resonate with Indonesia's diverse population.

Author's Contribution

Author 1: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, software, writing – original draft; Author 2: resources, supervision, validation, writing – review & editing; Author 3: methodology, software, supervision, validation, writing – review & editing; Author 4: methodology, supervision, validation, writing – review & editing.

Conflicts Of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was related by the authors.

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