



Synergy of Public Policy and Women's Empowerment: Skills Training as a Strategy to Strengthen Family Economy

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the synergy between public policy and women's empowerment through skills training as a strategy to strengthen the family economy in the 'Bangga Kencana' programme in Wajak District, Malang Regency. This research uses a qualitative case study approach, using in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and relationships between policy support and training effectiveness. Coding techniques were applied to categorise key themes relating to skills improvement, economic impact, and program challenges. The results showed that 70% of participants experienced improved skills, and household income increased by 15-25% within six months. However, only 40% received post-training mentoring, limiting the long-term impact. The main challenges faced were limited access to finance (50%), limited market networks (30%), and social norms (20%) that inhibit women's economic participation. While existing public policies aim to support women's empowerment, there are still gaps in implementation, requiring a more integrated approach. This study highlights the importance of integrating policy interventions with local needs by enhancing financial accessibility, expanding market linkages, and ensuring continuous mentoring to sustain empowerment outcomes. The research provides practical policy recommendations to strengthen women's economic participation, contributing to poverty reduction, gender equality, and sustainable rural development.

INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment has become one of the main focuses in social and economic development, especially in developing countries (Murliasari et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2025). Women's role in the family and community economy is increasingly recognised as a key factor in realising sustainable development (Miri et al., 2021). Women's involvement in economic activities contributes to improving family welfare and promoting local economic growth (Arias Hanco & Espinoza Villalobos, 2025). However, to date, women in rural areas still face various structural constraints, such as limited access to education, skills training, and economic resources. This gender-based economic inequality leads to women's low participation in the productive sector, hindering the achievement of more equitable economic welfare.

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) 2023, the average years of schooling (RLS) for women in Indonesia was 8.57 years, lower than for men at 9.09 years. This gap is more pronounced in rural areas, where access to secondary and higher education is more limited. The following table shows a comparison of the Gender Development Index (HDI) and Gender Empowerment Index (IDG) in Indonesia, East Java Province, and Malang District:

Table 1. Gender Development Index (IPG) and Gender Empowerment Index (IDG) 2022

Region	IPG 2022	IDG 2022	Average of Schooling for Women	Years
Indonesia	91,63	75,34	8,57 Years	

East Java	90,79	73,82	8,45 Years
Malang	89,45	71,20	8,22 Years

Regency

Source: BPS, 2023

From the table above, it can be seen that the IPG and IDG in Malang District are lower than the national average, indicating gender inequality in access to education, the economy, and involvement in decision-making. The average years of schooling for women in Malang District is also lower than the national figure, indicating a gap in formal education attainment.

In addition, limited access to skills training is also a major challenge for rural women. According to data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) in 2022, only 36% of women in rural areas have access to skills training programmes, compared to 58% in urban areas. This shows that there is still a gap in the provision of training programmes that can help women improve their employment and entrepreneurship skills.

Gender inequality also impacts women's participation in the economy (Brago et al., 2025). Based on BPS 2023 data, the labour force participation rate (TPAK) for women in Indonesia is only 53.41%, well below the 82.59% for men. In rural areas, this figure is even lower, as women are often trapped in domestic work or the informal sector, with unstable incomes. In addition, women in rural areas also face limited access to economic resources, such as business credit and asset ownership. According to a 2022 World Bank report, only 22% of women in rural Indonesia have access to business credit, compared to 45% of men (Bapolisi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, women's ownership of assets such as land and

property is also low, hindering their access to business capital (Falguera et al., 2025).

These gender-based economic inequalities in rural areas have far-reaching impacts, particularly in hindering inclusive economic growth and prolonging the cycle of poverty. With women's low participation in the productive sector, the local economy's potential cannot be fully utilised. The McKinsey Global Institute study (2021) shows that if women's participation in the economy can increase by 25%, Indonesia's GDP has the potential to increase to USD 135 billion by 2030 (Gayawan et al., 2025). Therefore, more inclusive and sustainable policies are needed to ensure that rural women have greater access to education, skills training, and economic resources that support their independence.

To address these issues, the East Java government has launched the 'Bangga Kencana' Movement Programme for Women and Family Empowerment. 'Bangga Kencana' (Family Development, Population, and Family Planning) is a programme of BKKBN East Java that aims to improve the welfare of women's families through one of its programmes for family economic counselling (Afifuddin et al., 2023; Supriyanto et al., 2025). The programme is designed to equip women with skills that can be used in independent economic activities, both in the formal and informal sectors. Skills training is relevant because it can improve women's capabilities in developing small businesses, creating employment opportunities, and strengthening family economic resilience (Mekonen et al., 2025; Sahoo et al., 2025). However, although women's empowerment policies have been implemented in various regions, there are still gaps in implementation at the local level.

In academic research, there is still a research gap in the literature regarding the relationship between public policy and the effectiveness of skills training for women in rural areas. In addition to empirical gaps, this study also identifies theoretical gaps. Most studies on women's empowerment still place the economic dimension as the main indicator of empowerment, while aspects of public policy are often seen only as supporting factors, not an integral part of the theoretical framework of empowerment itself. As a result, the relationship between public policy and women's empowerment has not been conceptually explained within a comprehensive theoretical framework. This study attempts to fill this theoretical gap by integrating the perspectives of empowerment theory (Kabeer, 1999) and participatory public policy theory (Fischer, 2003) to explain how the interaction between policy and skills training can strengthen women's economic independence at the community level.

Most studies focus primarily on women's empowerment at the macro level, without examining policy implementation in local communities. Dash et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of economic, social, and legal aspects in women's empowerment but without discussing its implementation at the village level. Matovu et al. (2025) also show that gender-based policies increase women's economic participation, but their study is still global in scale and does not evaluate the effectiveness of policies in villages.

Studies on the effectiveness of women's skills training in rural areas are also limited. Research shows that skills training increases women's economic independence, but these studies focus more on technical aspects without evaluating policy support (Paul, 2025; Shibre et al., 2025; Simon & Hasan, 2025). Other studies have also found that village-based training can increase women's economic participation but have not examined

the role of local government in ensuring programme sustainability (Eom et al., 2025; Vicent et al., 2025). There is also a lack of research on the long-term impact of skills training on family economic security. Rotem and Boyle (2025) found that training increased women's income, but their study only included a short-term evaluation. Leproni and Azara (2025) revealed that marketing and access to capital remain barriers for women post-training, which should be a concern for long-term policy.

After reviewing previous research, this study will fill the literature gap by contributing to linking public policy and the effectiveness of skills training in local communities. In addition to exploring policy implementation in villages and the barriers faced, this research also analyses the factors that influence the sustainability of the training's impact on family economic resilience. Thus, this research not only enriches women's empowerment studies but also offers policy-based recommendations to improve the effectiveness of skills training programmes in rural areas.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse the linkages between public policy and women's empowerment through skills training as a strategy to strengthen the family economy. Specifically, this study (1) analyses the effectiveness of the Movement 'Bangga Kencana' skills training programme for Women and Family Empowerment in rural communities, (2) identifies the factors supporting and inhibiting its success, (3) and explores how policies can be more synergised with community needs. A case study-based approach was used in Wonoayu Village, Wajak Sub-district, Malang District.

This research is expected to provide more contextualised insights into the effectiveness of skills training for women. In addition, the results of this study are expected to make an academic contribution to the study of women's empowerment and offer evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to improve the effectiveness of women's empowerment programmes. Thus, this research not only has academic significance but also practical implications for formulating more inclusive and evidence-based policies.

Based on theoretical foundations, this study uses Kabeer's (1999) theory of women's empowerment, which emphasises three main dimensions (resources, agency, and achievement) as well as Fischer's (2003) theory of participatory public policy, which emphasises the importance of community involvement in the policy formulation and implementation process. These two frameworks are used to analyse the extent to which public policy and skills-training programs synergise to improve women's economic independence at the local level. Analytically, this study operationalizes these concepts into four main indicators: (1) the relevance of training to local needs (resources), (2) the increase in women's capacity and participation in economic activities (agency), (3) policy support and access to economic resources (policy support), and (4) the sustainability of the impact of training on family economic resilience (achievement). With this framework, this study aims to explain the conceptual relationship between public policy interventions and women's economic empowerment in rural areas.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyse the synergy between public policy and women's empowerment through skills training in the 'Bangga Kencana' programme in Wonoayu Village, Wajak District, Malang Regency (Yin, 2016). The case study design was chosen

because it allows an in-depth and contextual exploration of how local policy interventions influence the effectiveness and sustainability of women's empowerment efforts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach is particularly useful in understanding real-life phenomena related to training programmes and their impact on family economic resilience in rural areas. Data collection involved three key methods: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) direct observations, and (3) document analysis.

Interviews were conducted with one government official responsible for women's empowerment policy, two training programme officers, and ten female participants. These interviews aimed to explore the implementation process, participants' experiences, and perceived impacts on their economic conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, direct observations were carried out during training sessions to observe interactions between facilitators and participants, and how acquired skills were applied in daily activities. This method helped capture social dynamics and practical challenges often missed in interviews. Furthermore, policy document analysis was conducted by reviewing national and regional regulations, programme reports, and secondary data from relevant institutions to understand how well policies supported programme goals (Riyanto et al., 2023). Presented a flowchart to understand.

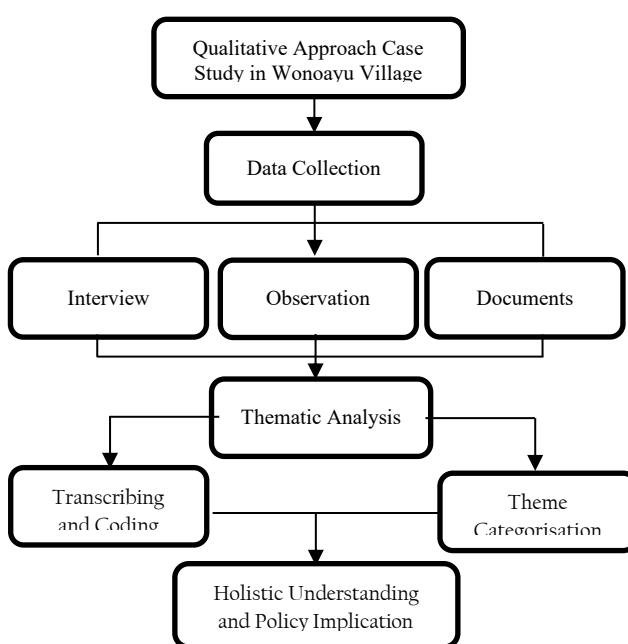


Figure 1. Flowchart of the research method

Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes from the interviews, observations, and document reviews. The process involved transcription of interviews, systematic coding, and theme categorisation based on aspects such as training relevance, policy support, post-training mentoring, and economic outcomes (Haq et al., 2021). Relationships among themes were then examined to understand the effectiveness of the synergy between public policy and skills training (Flemming & Noyes, 2021; Miles et al., 2014). This method enables a holistic understanding of policy implementation at the community level and its impact on women's economic independence. The findings provide practical

and policy-relevant insights to improve the design and sustainability of rural women's empowerment programmes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Resources: Policy Support and Access to Training

The implementation of the 'Bangga Kencana' programme in Wonoayu Village, Wajak Sub-district, Malang District, has shown a significant impact on women's economic empowerment in rural communities. The programme aims to improve women's skills in managing the family economy through entrepreneurial training, technical skills, and access to local business networks. Interviews with participants showed that more than 70% of the women who participated in the training experienced improved skills in managing micro-enterprises, including production of household goods, processing of agricultural products, and digital marketing. One participant said, 'I can now make and sell processed agricultural products online, something I never imagined before.' This finding is in line with the study by Jia et al. (2025), which confirms that community-based training increases women's participation in the productive economy and reduces gender inequality in access to employment and economic resources. The key findings of the programme's outcomes are summarised in the table below for clarity and emphasis.

Table 2. Key Findings of the 'Bangga Kencana' Training Programme in Wonoayu Village

Category	Key Findings
Improved Skills	70% of participants experienced improved skills in micro business management.
Increased Income	15-25% of participants experienced an increase in income in the 6 months following the training.
Participants Received	Mentoring Only 40% of participants received post-training mentoring.
Types Businesses	Developed Handicrafts, food processing, sewing services, and cosmetology.
Local Government	Support Provision of training funds and programme support facilities.
Other Supporting	Factors Family support, access to microcredit, and local market networks.
Main Barriers	Access to capital (50%), market network (30%), social norms (20%).
Continuing Challenges	No long-term evaluation and limited training infrastructure.

Source: processed from research results

In terms of skills upgrading, the 'Bangga Kencana' programme has been tailored to local market needs. Some participants have successfully developed businesses in handicrafts, processed foods, and services such as tailoring and cosmetology. However, challenges remain. One participant revealed, 'I want to expand my business, but it is difficult to get quality raw materials at affordable prices.' This shows that constraints in access to raw materials and product distribution networks still hamper the growth of women's businesses in villages. Lentz et al. (2025) emphasise that

the suitability of skills with market demand determines the sustainability of women's businesses in the informal sector.

In addition to improving skills, this programme also has an impact on women's economic independence and family economic resilience. Previous studies suggest that community-based training can increase women's income by 20-30%, especially if supported by access to business credit and adequate market networks (Mekonen et al., 2025). Interviews showed that most participants who applied their skills in micro-enterprises experienced a 15-25% increase in income in the first six months after the training. One participant stated, 'After the training, I can sell more products and increase my family income.' However, obstacles remain. Another participant revealed, 'I already have the skills, but it is difficult to get a loan because I have no collateral.' This finding is consistent with previous studies, which found that rural women often have difficulty accessing microloans due to limited asset collateral (Eom et al., 2025).

The success of the 'Bangga Kencana' programme also relies heavily on the role of facilitators and the host institution in providing post-training support. The training approach adopted was a combination of lectures, hands-on practice, and mentoring by local business actors, which is in line with the recommendation of Shibre et al. (2025) that experiential approaches are more effective in increasing women's capacity than passive learning methods. However, only 40 per cent of participants received post-training mentoring, which resulted in difficulties in sustaining the business in the long term. One participant revealed, 'We received training, but after that, there was no further assistance, so we had to find our own way to develop the business.' This is in line with previous research, which found that training accompanied by ongoing mentoring has a higher rate of business sustainability compared to training without follow-up (Corpădean & Pantea, 2025; Rumenge et al., 2025). Therefore, improving facilitators' capacity and the post-training mentoring system is necessary to ensure the programme's benefits continue to be felt in the long term.

These findings reflect Kabeer's (1999) empowerment framework, particularly the resources and achievement dimensions. Access to training expanded women's productive resources, while increased income represented tangible achievements of empowerment. However, the lack of post-training mentoring indicates that women's agency remains constrained, highlighting the need for structural policy support as emphasized in Fischer's (2003) participatory policy model.

Agency: Women's Participation and Decision-Making

The success of the 'Bangga Kencana' programme in Wonoayu Village is inseparable from various supporting factors that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of skills training for rural women. One of the main factors is government policy support, which plays an important role in facilitating training delivery and providing access to economic resources. The sustainability of women's empowerment programmes relies heavily on the integration of local and national policies in supporting women's access to education, training, and the productive economy (Hong & Fuller, 2019; Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). In Wonoayu Village, local government policies that allocate funds for women's skills training have enabled more participants from weak economic groups to join the programme.

In addition to government policies, community and family support are also key factors in the success of the programme. A supportive social environment can increase women's

participation in training and the world of work, especially in rural areas where traditional roles are still strong (Anwar et al., 2023; Asmarany et al., 2024; Ferine et al., 2024). Previous studies have also found that women who receive support from their families are more likely to apply acquired skills in economic endeavours compared to those who face resistance from their neighbours (Arias Hanco & Espinoza Villalobos, 2025; Yu et al., 2025). This was also seen in Wonoayu Village, where women who were supported by their husbands and families tended to be more active in developing their businesses after the training.

Other factors that support programme success are access to business capital and market networks. Women's skills training is only effective if it is supported by access to venture capital and marketing networks that enable them to develop their businesses sustainably (Bapolisi et al., 2025; Brago et al., 2025; Valentino et al., 2025). In Wonoayu Village, some participants who had access to business capital through the microcredit programme showed a more significant increase in income than those who did not have access to financing. However, limited market access is still a challenge that needs to be overcome to improve the competitiveness of products produced by women trainees.

Finally, the sustainability of training impacts is also influenced by post-training mentoring. Skills training accompanied by mentoring and technical support has a higher success rate than programmes that only provide one-time training without follow-up (Falguera et al., 2025; Gayawan et al., 2025). In Wonoayu Village, participants who received mentoring in business management and digital marketing showed more stable business growth than those who only relied on the initial training. Therefore, increasing the capacity of facilitators to provide long-term mentoring can strengthen the programme's impact on women's economies in rural communities (Risdwiyanto et al., 2024; Sahoo et al., 2025).

Although the 'Bangga Kencana' programme has various supporting factors, there are several barriers that hinder its success. One of the main challenges is participants' limited access to training, mainly due to geographical, economic and social factors. Women in rural areas often experience barriers to accessing skills training due to inadequate infrastructure, limited information, and high domestic workloads (Dash et al., 2025; Matovu et al., 2025; Sjahruddin et al., 2024). The results of this study are in line with conditions in Wonoayu Village, where some women were unable to attend the training due to the distance to the training location and limited time available due to household responsibilities.

Another challenge is programme sustainability, which continues to face obstacles in long-term monitoring and evaluation. Without an effective monitoring system, many training programmes fail to deliver long-term impact due to a lack of mechanisms to assess participants' success and the challenges they face after training (Paul, 2025; Vicent et al., 2025). In Wonoayu Village, the training programmes that have been running lack robust long-term evaluation mechanisms, making it difficult to assess the extent to which participants apply the skills they acquire in their daily lives.

Another significant barrier is women's lack of access to economic resources, including business capital, raw materials, and market networks. Research by Rotem and Boyle (2025) shows that a lack of access to economic resources is a major factor hindering women from developing their businesses after training. In Wonoayu Village, many participants experienced difficulties obtaining business capital because microcredit requirements

remained difficult for low-income women to fulfil. In addition, limitations in obtaining raw materials at competitive prices are also an obstacle in the production of small businesses run by women post-training.

In addition to economic barriers, cultural constraints and social norms also play a large role in limiting women's participation in the productive economy. [Rumenge et al. \(2025\)](#), in their study of gender norms in developing countries, confirmed that social stereotypes about women's roles in the household are still an obstacle to increasing women's participation in the world of work and entrepreneurship. This is also evident in Wonoayu Village, where some women face social pressure to continue fulfilling domestic roles despite having acquired skills that can help them economically. Therefore, a more holistic approach is needed to change social perceptions and encourage wider acceptance of women's roles in the economic sector.

The interaction between supporting and hindering factors in this programme demonstrates that empowerment is a multidimensional process shaped by access to resources and decision-making autonomy. This finding aligns with [Kabeer's \(1999\)](#) concept of agency, where women's capacity to act is determined not only by individual motivation but also by enabling social and institutional structures. The observed cultural and structural barriers thus reaffirm [Fischer's \(2003\)](#) argument that participatory policy implementation is crucial for sustaining empowerment at the community level.

Achievement: Economic Outcomes and Family Resilience

The success of the 'Bangga Kencana' programme in Wonoayu Village largely depends on the extent to which the policies implemented are aligned with the needs of the local community. Effective women's empowerment must be based on adaptive and community-based policies, not just macro approaches that do not consider the local context ([Corpădean & Pantea, 2025](#); [Shibre et al., 2025](#)). The results of this study show that although the programme has provided skills training, there are still gaps in policy alignment with socio-economic conditions in Wonoayu Village, particularly in post-training assistance continuity and women's access to business capital.

The role of local government in supporting skills-based women's empowerment is also a determining factor in the success of this programme. Proactive local government support can accelerate women's integration into the productive economic sector through policies that facilitate access to training, business capital and marketing networks ([Eom et al., 2025](#); [Mekonen et al., 2025](#)). This study found that, despite local government efforts to provide training facilities, women's access to economic resources remains limited in Wonoayu Village. Some participants experienced difficulties in developing their businesses due to limited marketing infrastructure and low purchasing power at the community level.

To strengthen the link between policies and realities on the ground, a more integrated approach that is responsive to the needs of women in rural communities is needed. Women's empowerment policies should involve women as key actors in the planning and implementation process, not just as passive beneficiaries ([Jia et al., 2025](#); [Lentz et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, the main recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the 'Bangga Kencana' policy are to involve women in the local policy formulation process, strengthen coordination between local governments and training institutions, and develop a

community-based policy monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the sustainability of the programme's impact in the long term ([Simon & Hasan, 2025](#)).

Conceptually, these results extend the theoretical linkage between public policy and empowerment. By showing that policy alignment with local needs enhances women's agency and economic achievement, this study reinforces the integrative view of empowerment proposed by [Kabeer \(1999\)](#) and adds to [Fischer's \(2003\)](#) argument that participatory governance serves as a structural enabler of sustainable empowerment.

Research Implications and Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several strategies can be implemented to improve the effectiveness of training and empowerment of women in rural communities. Skills training is more impactful when combined with access to finance and strong market networks ([Bapolisi et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, 'Bangga Kencana' needs to be strengthened with post-training business mentoring, connectivity with digital markets, and incentive schemes for participants who successfully develop businesses to ensure long-term impact ([Brago et al., 2025](#); [Setiawan et al., 2024](#)).

To ensure programme sustainability at the village and district levels, more inclusive and community-based policies are needed. Sustainable women's empowerment programmes should include flexible access to finance and a consistent mentoring system ([Valentino et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, strategic measures that can be implemented include the provision of grants for start-up women's businesses, increased cooperation with cooperatives and microfinance institutions, and the development of technology-based training to improve rural women's digital skills ([Falguera et al., 2025](#); [Gayawan et al., 2025](#)).

The main obstacles rural women face in developing businesses are limited access to capital and market networks. Women's economic empowerment requires an ecosystem that allows them to access capital, business networks, and raw materials easily ([Dash et al., 2025](#); [Sahoo et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, policies that can be implemented include expanding the women-specific People's Business Credit (KUR) programme, strengthening community-based marketing networks, and encouraging private sector involvement through partnerships and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Although this study provides insights into the relationship between public policy and women's empowerment, several limitations should be considered. First, the study's limited geographic scope makes it difficult to generalise the results to other regions with different socio-economic conditions. Secondly, the more qualitative research approach does not yield quantitative data that can statistically strengthen the findings. Thirdly, the relatively short research period limits the analysis of the long-term impact of the training programme on participants' economic welfare.

Therefore, several recommendations can be considered for future research. Firstly, the geographical scope of the research should be expanded to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of women's empowerment policies in various socio-economic contexts. Second, the study of long-term impacts through longitudinal studies to understand the extent to which skills training contributes to the economic resilience of participants. Fourth, the identification of factors supporting the sustainability of the programme so that women's empowerment does not only stop at training but also includes access to business

capital, business network support, and regulations that facilitate product marketing.

In addition, future research can explore digital-based training models as a solution to overcome access limitations and expand the reach of women's empowerment programmes, especially in remote areas. The utilisation of technology can be an effective means of increasing women's access to training without relying on face-to-face methods. Therefore, policies that can be implemented include expanding the women-specific People's Business Credit (KUR) programme, strengthening community-based marketing networks, and encouraging private sector involvement through partnerships and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Although this study provides insights into the relationship between public policy and women's empowerment, there are several limitations that need to be considered.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the synergy between public policy and skills training significantly improves women's economic independence in rural communities. Findings show that 70% of participants improved their skills, and 15-25% reported an increase in household income within six months. However, key barriers - such as limited access to capital, weak market linkages, and the absence of post-training mentoring - continue to undermine the programme's long-term effectiveness. The results of this study show that skills training alone is not enough. For empowerment to be sustainable, it must be supported by inclusive policies that provide access to finance, develop local market ecosystems, and ensure consistent mentoring. Strengthening institutional coordination and adapting interventions to local needs are important steps to increase women's participation in the productive economy.

Limitations of this study include the narrow geographic focus on a single village, the qualitative nature of the data which limits generalisability, and the short observation period. These constraints may limit the wider applicability of the findings. Future research should expand to different regions and use mixed methods or longitudinal approaches to assess the long-term impact of training programmes. In addition, investigating the potential of digital training platforms may provide an innovative solution to increase access to empowerment initiatives in remote areas. By paying attention to these dimensions, women's empowerment programmes can become more impactful, resilient, and aligned with sustainable development goals. Theoretically, this study extends Kabeer's empowerment model by demonstrating that public policy synergy functions as a structural enabler that enhances women's agency and achievement in rural economic contexts.

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