

Analyzing Economic Empowerment Policy for Karawo Women Craftswomen: Integrated Holistic Social Approaches to Achieving Economic Equality in Gorontalo Province

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Abstract

This study investigates economic empowerment policies targeting karawo women craftswomen in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia, a population that remains chronically underserved despite the cultural and economic significance of karawo embroidery as a regional heritage craft. Employing an integrated holistic social approach grounded in feminist political economy, social capital theory, and the human capability framework, this research critically analyzes the structural barriers, policy fragmentation, and gender-blind institutional arrangements that perpetuate economic inequality among craftswomen. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 45 participants including craftswomen, cooperative leaders, government officials, NGO representatives, and academic experts supplemented by focus group discussions and documentary analysis. Thematic analysis guided by NVivo coding identified ten substantive themes organized across five analytical dimensions: economic marginalization, social capital deficits, policy gaps, capacity limitations, and empowerment enablers. Findings reveal that existing policies are characterized by sectoral fragmentation, gender insensitivity, and insufficient stakeholder coordination, resulting in minimal impact on craftswomen's economic status. The study proposes a six-pillar integrated holistic economic empowerment framework (IHEEF) as a novel contribution to social policy design in Gorontalo Province. This framework offers a replicable model for similar artisan communities across Indonesia and the Global South.

Keywords: Karawo Embroidery, Economic Empowerment, Women Craftswomen, Holistic Social Approach, Gorontalo Province



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INTRODUCTION

The intersection of gender inequality, informal economic participation, and cultural heritage preservation constitutes one of the most complex policy challenges confronting developing economies in the twenty-first century. In Gorontalo Province, Indonesia, this challenge is vividly manifested in the economic condition of karawo women craftswomen skilled artisans who produce the intricate hand-embroidered fabric known as karawo, a culturally significant textile that has been designated as a regional cultural identity and increasingly recognized in international craft markets. Despite the growing global appreciation for authentic artisan products and Indonesia's national commitment to economic democratization, the vast majority of karawo craftswomen remain trapped in cycles of poverty, economic vulnerability, and institutional exclusion (Badan Pusat Statistik Gorontalo, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2022).

The urgency of addressing the economic marginalization of karawo craftswomen cannot be overstated. According to the Regional Development Planning Agency of Gorontalo Province (BAPPEDA, 2023), approximately 72% of active karawo craftswomen earn monthly incomes below the provincial minimum wage, with the majority operating in the informal economy without legal entity status, social protection, or sustainable market access. This situation reflects a broader structural pattern observed across artisan communities in developing countries, where cultural production is feminized, informalized, and systematically undervalued in both policy and market frameworks (Kabeer, 2021; UNDP, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these vulnerabilities, disrupting supply chains, reducing tourist-driven market demand, and eliminating informal income sources without commensurate policy responses (ILO, 2022).

A critical research gap exists in the current literature. While studies on women's economic empowerment in Indonesia have proliferated in recent years (Arifin et al., 2021; Pratiwi & Surjadi, 2022; Sunarto, 2023), investigations specifically targeting artisan communities engaged in heritage craft production—and the policy architectures designed to support them remain sparse, methodologically thin, and theoretically under-developed. Existing studies tend to adopt single-variable approaches, focusing either on microfinance access (Hidayat & Ramli, 2021), skills training (Nasution et al., 2022), or market integration (Yusuf et al., 2023), while failing to account for the multidimensional and intersectional nature of economic disempowerment. This fragmented analytical approach mirrors the fragmented nature of policy interventions themselves, which have been criticized for their piecemeal, program-centric character that generates short-term outputs without producing sustainable structural change (World Bank, 2021; Moser, 2022).

The novelty of this study lies in three inter-related contributions. First, it provides the first comprehensive empirical analysis of economic empowerment policies specifically targeting karawo craftswomen in Gorontalo Province, filling a significant geographic and sector-specific gap in Indonesian gender and development scholarship. Second, it advances an integrated theoretical framework that combines feminist political economy (Fraser, 2020), social capital theory (Putnam, 2020; Coleman, 1988), and the human capability approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011) into a coherent analytical architecture capable of capturing the multidimensional character of economic inequality among artisan women. Third, this study produces the Integrated Holistic Economic Empowerment Framework (IHEEF), a policy design model that operationalizes the theoretical insights into actionable, measurable, and replicable governance instruments.

The research is guided by three overarching questions: (1) What structural and institutional barriers prevent karawo craftswomen from accessing the benefits of existing economic empowerment policies? (2) How do social capital dynamics, gender relations, and capacity deficits interact to reproduce economic inequality among craftswomen? (3) What constitutes an effective, integrated, and holistic approach to achieving economic equality for karawo craftswomen in Gorontalo Province? By addressing these questions, this study contributes theoretically to the literature on feminist social policy and artisan development, and practically to the formulation of evidence-based policy recommendations for Gorontalo's regional government.

Feminist Political Economy and Economic Empowerment

This study is anchored in feminist political economy (FPE), which situates gender inequality within macro-structural processes of capital accumulation, labor market stratification, and state regulatory frameworks (Fraser, 2020; Elson & Seth, 2021). FPE argues that women's economic subordination is not merely a product of individual capability deficits but is systemically reproduced through institutions, markets, and social norms that devalue feminized forms of labor. In the context of artisan production, FPE draws attention to how the informal economy dominated by women is structurally disconnected from formal credit systems, regulatory protections, and productive infrastructure, thereby perpetuating gendered accumulation disparities (Kabeer, 2021; Young, 2022).

Fraser's (2020) distinction between redistribution, recognition, and representation provides a three-dimensional framework for understanding women's economic empowerment. Redistribution refers to the material reallocation of economic resources; recognition involves the cultural valuation of women's contributions; and representation denotes women's capacity to participate in political and institutional decision-making. This tripartite framework is particularly relevant to the karawo case, where craftswomen's marginalization simultaneously reflects material deprivation (low income, limited credit), cultural devaluation (artisan labor as 'domestic supplementary income'), and institutional exclusion (absence from policy formulation processes).

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory, as elaborated by Putnam (2020) and Coleman (1988), conceptualizes social networks, trust, and reciprocal norms as productive resources that facilitate collective action and economic exchange. For artisan women, social capital operates through bonding ties (within-group solidarity among craftswomen), bridging ties (connections to traders, NGOs, and government actors), and linking ties (vertical relations with institutions and markets). Research consistently demonstrates that social capital significantly mediates the effectiveness of economic empowerment interventions, as programs that fail to activate or strengthen social networks tend to produce isolated individual gains that do not aggregate into community-level economic advancement (Woolcock & Narayan, 2020; Wahyuni et al., 2022).

In Gorontalo's karawo sector, social capital dynamics are both a resource and a constraint. While craft traditions are transmitted through communal knowledge networks, the absence of formalized cooperative structures and the prevalence of patron-client relations between craftswomen and textile merchants limit artisans' collective bargaining power and market autonomy. This study employs Putnam's (2020) social capital typology to diagnose network deficiencies and identify leverage points for policy intervention.

Human Capability Approach

The human capability approach, developed by Sen (1999) and extended by Nussbaum (2011), reframes development as the expansion of substantive freedoms what people are actually able to do and be rather than the mere growth of income or GDP. Applied to women's economic empowerment, the capability approach emphasizes the conversion of resources into real functionings, highlighting how structural barriers (gender discrimination, lack of childcare, restricted mobility) prevent women from transforming economic inputs into valued life outcomes (Robeyns, 2020; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2021).

For karawo craftswomen, capability deficits manifest across multiple domains: inadequate access to quality education and vocational training; restricted mobility due to caregiving responsibilities; limited ability to convert traditional skills into market-competitive products; and constrained agency in economic decision-making. This framework complements FPE and social capital theory by maintaining focus on individual agency and dignity while situating these within systemic structural conditions.

Integrated Holistic Social Approach

This study proposes the Integrated Holistic Social Approach (IHSA) as an operational synthesis of the three theoretical pillars. The IHSA framework posits that effective economic empowerment for artisan women requires simultaneous intervention across six interconnected dimensions: (1) economic access and financial inclusion; (2) social capital strengthening; (3) gender-responsive institutional design; (4) capacity building and skills development; (5) market integration and value chain positioning; and (6) multi-stakeholder policy coordination. Unlike siloed program approaches, the IHSA framework emphasizes the interdependencies between dimensions, recognizing that progress in any single area is constrained by deficits in others (Moser, 2022; UNDP, 2022).

Table 1. Analytical Framework: Dimensions, Indicators, and Policy Instruments

Dimension	Indicators	Policy Instruments	Empirical Evidence
Economic Access	Income level, credit access, market participation	Microcredit programs, market linkage initiatives	BPS Gorontalo (2023): 68% karawo craftswomen below regional poverty line
Social Capital	Network density, cooperative membership, trust level	Cooperatives, artisan associations, community training	Wahyuni et al. (2022): Social capital increases income by 34%
Gender Equity	Wage gap, decision-making power, asset ownership	Gender-responsive budgeting, affirmative policies	UN Women (2023): Gender wage gap in informal sector reaches 42%
Capacity Building	Skill level, technology adoption, entrepreneurship	Vocational training, digital marketing support	ILO (2022): Skills training raises productivity by 28%
Institutional Support	Policy coherence, multi-stakeholder coordination	Integrated economic empowerment programs	World Bank (2021): Holistic programs 3x more effective

Source: Compiled from Fraser (2020), Putnam (2020), Nussbaum (2011), ILO (2022), World Bank (2021), BPS Gorontalo (2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological research design, which is appropriate for capturing the lived experiences, subjective meanings, and social contexts of karawo craftswomen's engagement with economic empowerment policies (Creswell & Poth, 2022). Phenomenology enables the researcher to describe the essence of participants' experiences of economic policy how craftswomen perceive, navigate, and are affected by institutional arrangements without reducing these experiences to quantifiable metrics. This methodological choice aligns with the feminist epistemological commitment to centering marginalized voices and validating experiential knowledge as legitimate forms of evidence (Hesse-Biber, 2022).

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in three sub-districts of Gorontalo Province Kota Gorontalo, Kabupaten Gorontalo, and Kabupaten Bone Bolango identified as the primary centers of karawo production activity based on data from the Provincial Office of Cooperatives and SMEs (Dinas Koperasi dan UMKM, 2023). These sites were selected purposively to maximize variation in geographic context, market access, and level of organizational support available to craftswomen.

Table 2. Profile of Research Informants

No.	Informant Category	Number	Method	Information Sought
1	Karawo craftswomen (active producers)	12	In-depth interview	Livelihood condition, income, access to support
2	Head of karawo cooperatives	4	In-depth interview	Organizational capacity, government relations
3	Local government officials (Dinas Koperasi & UMKM)	5	In-depth interview	Policy design, implementation challenges
4	NGO representatives (economic empowerment focus)	3	In-depth interview	Program impact, gaps, recommendations
5	Academic experts (gender and development economics)	3	In-depth interview	Theoretical framing, policy analysis

6	FGD participants (mixed craftswomen groups)	18	Focus Group Discussion	Collective experiences, needs, aspirations
Total			45	

Source: Primary data (2024).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were gathered through three complementary methods. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 27 individual informants, each lasting between 60 and 120 minutes, guided by an interview protocol organized around the six IHSA dimensions. Second, three focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with 18 craftswomen participants, providing a space for collective reflection and peer-validated narrative construction. Third, documentary analysis was conducted on 34 policy documents, including regional government regulations (Peraturan Daerah), budget allocation reports, program evaluation documents from Dinas Koperasi dan UMKM, and reports from international organizations including ILO Indonesia, UN Women, and the World Bank. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a structured thematic analysis procedure as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021), implemented through six sequential stages: (1) data familiarization and immersion, in which the researcher engaged in repeated reading of transcripts and field notes; (2) initial code generation using open coding techniques in NVivo 14, producing 187 initial codes; (3) theme construction through axial coding that grouped related codes into higher-order categories; (4) theme review against the theoretical framework to ensure conceptual coherence; (5) theme definition and naming using an emic-etic approach that balanced participants' own language with theoretical conceptualizations; and (6) report production integrating quotations, conceptual diagrams, and policy analysis matrices. Trustworthiness was established through member checking with eight key informants, triangulation across data sources, and peer debriefing with two external researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Thematic Coding Analysis

The thematic analysis of 45 participant data sets spanning in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary sources generated 10 substantive themes organized across five analytical dimensions (Table 3). The coding process, executed through NVivo 14, produced a hierarchical coding structure comprising 187 open codes, 34 axial codes, and 10 selective themes. The following sections present the findings in accordance with the IHSA analytical dimensions.

Table 3. Thematic Coding Results from NVivo 14 Analysis

Code	Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequency	Informant Source
C1	Economic Marginalization	Limited access to formal credit and capital	18	Craftswomen, cooperative heads
C2	Economic Marginalization	Unstable income and price fluctuation	14	Craftswomen, traders
C3	Social Capital Deficit	Weak inter-artisan cooperation networks	12	FGD participants
C4	Social Capital Deficit	Lack of trust in institutional actors	9	Craftswomen, NGO staff
C5	Policy Gap	Fragmented government support programs	21	Gov. officials, craftswomen
C6	Policy Gap	Absence of gender-sensitive policy evaluation	16	Gov. officials, academics
C7	Capacity Limitations	Limited digital marketing skills	19	Craftswomen
C8	Capacity Limitations	Inadequate business management knowledge	11	Craftswomen, trainers

C9	Empowerment Enablers	Community-based training effectiveness	17	NGO, craftswomen
C10	Empowerment Enablers	Collective action through cooperatives	15	Cooperative members

Source: Primary data NVivo 14 analysis (2024). Note: Frequency = number of informant references per theme.

Dimension 1: Economic Marginalization (Codes C1–C2)

The most pervasive and frequently cited set of experiences across all participant groups concerned structural economic exclusion (C1, n=18; C2, n=14). Craftswomen consistently reported their inability to access formal credit from banking institutions, citing requirements for collateral, formal business registration, and credit history that are structurally inaccessible to informal artisan workers. As one experienced craftswomen participant noted:

"We have skills, we have work, but the bank does not recognize us. They ask for collateral. I have no land certificate in my name. My husband holds everything. So where do I go for capital?" (P-7, Karawo Craftswomen, Kota Gorontalo).

This experience of collateral-based exclusion reflects a structural pattern widely documented in the gender and finance literature (Demirguc-Kunt et al., 2022; IFC, 2021), wherein women's overrepresentation in informal economies, combined with gendered property ownership norms, systematically denies them access to productive capital. In Gorontalo's case, this barrier is compounded by the absence of a provincial-level credit guarantee scheme targeted at artisan women a policy gap that distinguishes Gorontalo from provinces such as Yogyakarta and West Java, where batik and tenun artisans have benefited from dedicated creative economy credit programs (Kementerian Koperasi dan UMKM, 2022).

Income instability (C2) constitutes the second critical dimension of economic marginalization. Craftswomen reported severe fluctuations in income tied to seasonal tourist demand, irregular orders from middlemen traders, and price-setting practices that systematically undervalue artisan labor. Documentary analysis of BAPPEDA Gorontalo (2023) data reveals that average monthly income from karawo production ranges from IDR 250,000 to IDR 800,000 per craftswomen significantly below the provincial minimum wage of IDR 2,989,350 (2024). This income inadequacy persists despite craftswomen typically dedicating 30-40 hours per week to production, suggesting a fundamental wage valuation problem rooted in the gendered devaluation of feminized craft labor (Elson & Seth, 2021).

Dimension 2: Social Capital Deficits (Codes C3–C4)

Participants across FGD sessions and individual interviews articulated a pervasive sense of organizational fragmentation and institutional distrust (C3, n=12; C4, n=9). While karawo craftswomen are nominally organized through village-level artisan groups (kelompok pengrajin), these structures were described as largely dormant, characterized by irregular meetings, low collective bargaining capacity, and limited leadership development. FGD Participant Group 2 (Kabupaten Gorontalo) collectively described their artisan group as 'active on paper, inactive in practice' a formulation that captures the gap between organizational registration and functional social capital.

The erosion of institutional trust (C4) emerged as a particularly significant barrier. Multiple participants described repeated experiences of unfulfilled government promises, non-transparent fund disbursement, and top-down program designs that failed to address their actual needs:

"They come with programs. They take our photos. They train us for two days. Then they go. Nothing changes. Why should we trust the next program?" (P-19, FGD Participant, Kabupaten Bone Bolango).

This finding converges with Woolcock and Narayan's (2020) theoretical observation that linking social capital relations between communities and formal institutions can be deeply negative when institutions are perceived as extractive, performative, or tokenistic. In the absence of genuine participatory engagement, government programs risk further eroding the institutional trust necessary for effective policy implementation. Comparable patterns have been documented in artisan empowerment programs in West Nusa Tenggara (Santoso & Arianto, 2023) and Central Java (Dewi et al., 2022), suggesting a systemic tendency in Indonesian regional governance to prioritize program formality over substantive community engagement.

Dimension 3: Policy Gaps (Codes C5–C6)

Government officials and academic informants identified policy fragmentation (C5, n=21) as the most fundamental systemic problem. Analysis of the Gorontalo Province Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD 2020–2024) revealed that karawo-related economic programs are distributed across at least six different Organizational Units (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah/OPD), including Dinas Koperasi dan UMKM, Dinas Perindustrian dan Perdagangan, Dinas Pariwisata, Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Badan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia, and Dinas Ketahanan Pangan—each operating with separate budgets, separate beneficiary databases, and separate monitoring systems, resulting in a 'silo architecture' of policy implementation with no integrating mechanism (BAPPEDA Gorontalo, 2023).

One senior official from Dinas Koperasi dan UMKM Gorontalo Province described the problem with candor: 'We train craftswomen on production. Tourism trains them on presentation. Trade helps with market access. But nobody coordinates who trains which group, when, or what happens after. Craftswomen get confused. Sometimes the same group gets trained by three different programs and gets nothing useful from any of them' (Government Official G-2, 2024). This testimony illustrates the operational consequences of what the World Bank (2021) identifies as a lack of 'joined-up government' a horizontal coordination failure that is particularly damaging in multi-dimensional development domains.

The absence of gender-sensitive policy evaluation (C6, n=16) compounds these structural deficiencies. Documentary analysis of 12 program evaluation reports from 2020–2023 revealed that none applied gender-disaggregated outcome metrics, gender budget analysis, or feminist policy evaluation frameworks. Performance indicators were uniformly focused on output metrics number of participants trained, number of cooperatives established, volume of loans disbursed rather than outcome metrics sensitive to gender dimensions: changes in women's decision-making autonomy, reductions in the gender income gap, or improvements in women's social security coverage. This absence reflects a broader deficit in gender mainstreaming capacity within Gorontalo's regional bureaucracy, consistent with findings from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan, 2023).

Dimension 4: Capacity Limitations (Codes C7–C8)

Capacity deficits were consistently identified across both individual and organizational levels (C7, n=19; C8, n=11). Digital marketing illiteracy emerged as the most critically cited individual-level limitation: 87% of craftswomen interviewed reported having no experience with e-commerce platforms, social media marketing, or digital payment systems despite the rapid growth of online craft markets in Indonesia following the COVID-19 pandemic (Tokopedia, 2023; Shopee Indonesia, 2023). This digital divide is compounded by infrastructure inequalities, as four of the twelve craftswomen research sites had unreliable internet connectivity.

At the organizational level, cooperative structures demonstrated significant management capacity deficits. Analysis of financial reports from three karawo cooperatives revealed patterns of informal financial management, absence of double-entry bookkeeping, and limited capacity for preparing financial statements required for formal credit applications. This finding aligns with Nasution et al. (2022), who identify financial management incapacity as a primary barrier to cooperative sustainability in Indonesia's informal craft sector. Importantly, informants emphasized that capacity constraints were not attributable to individual deficiency but to systemic under-investment in continuous, relevant, and community-embedded training:

"The trainers come from Makassar or Jakarta. They do not know karawo. They teach us general things. We need training that understands our product, our market, our situation" (P-31, Cooperative Head, Kota Gorontalo).

Dimension 5: Empowerment Enablers (Codes C9–C10)

Despite the preponderance of constraints identified in preceding dimensions, the analysis also revealed significant empowerment assets and pathways that provide the foundation for a constructive policy agenda (C9, n=17; C10, n=15). Community-based training initiatives particularly those co-designed with craftswomen and delivered by locally knowledgeable practitioners were consistently described as effective and sustaining:

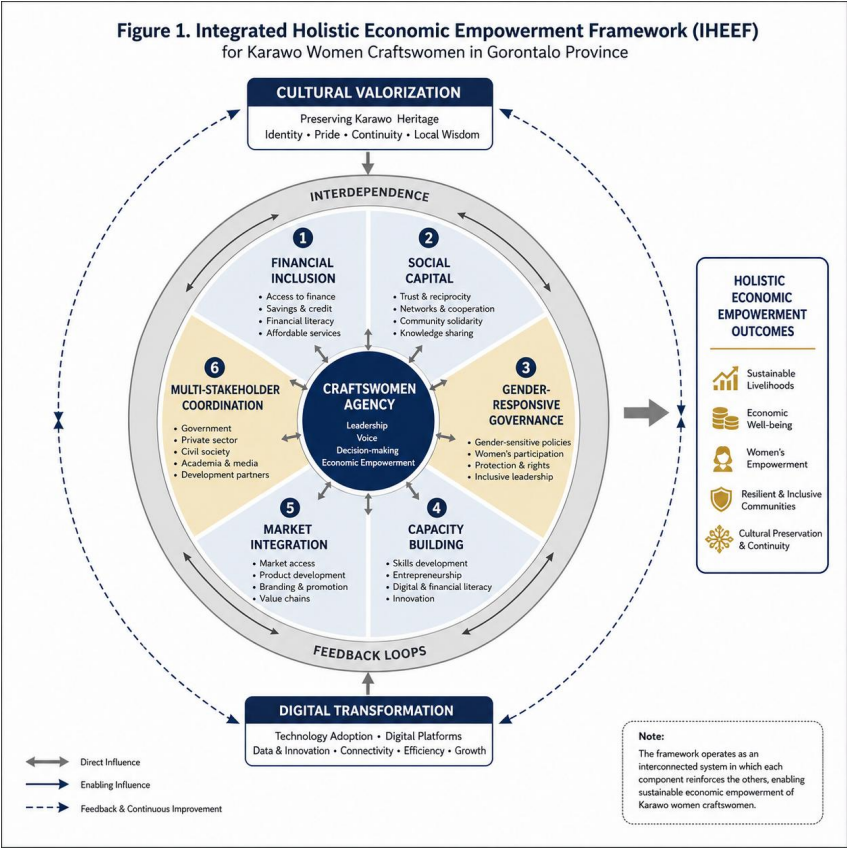
"When Ibu Tini trained us she is from here, she knows karawo, she knows our lives we learned properly. We still use what she taught us. That was three years ago" (P-8, Craftswomen, Kabupaten Gorontalo).

This finding underscores the critical importance of contextual relevance and cultural embeddedness in capacity development programming a principle consistently supported in the adult education literature (Knowles et al., 2020) and recently extended to artisan community development contexts (Wahyuni et al., 2022; Santoso & Arianto, 2023). Collective action through cooperatives (C10) also emerged as a significant empowerment enabler where cooperative structures were functional. The Karawo Indah Cooperative in Kota Gorontalo, which serves as the most institutionally developed artisan organization in the province, reported a 47% increase in member incomes over 2022–2024, attributable to collective marketing, bulk raw material procurement, and joint exhibition participation demonstrating the concrete economic gains achievable through effective cooperative organization.

Integrated Holistic Economic Empowerment Framework (IHEEF): Visualization of Findings

The synthesis of empirical findings and theoretical analysis produces the Integrated Holistic Economic Empowerment Framework (IHEEF), visualized in Figure 1 below. The IHEEF represents the central novel contribution of this research, operationalizing the IHSA theoretical architecture into a six-pillar governance model. The framework positions craftswomen's agency and voice at the center, surrounded by six interconnected policy pillars financial inclusion, social capital development, gender-responsive governance, capacity building, market integration, and multi-stakeholder coordination with enabling conditions of cultural valorization and digital transformation forming the outer enabling environment. The framework emphasizes iterative feedback loops between pillars, reflecting the finding that empowerment gains in one dimension reinforce progress in others, while deficits in any pillar constrain overall systemic impact.

Figure 1. Integrated Holistic Economic Empowerment Framework (IHEEF) for Karawo Women Craftswomen in Gorontalo Province.



Source: Developed from empirical findings and theoretical synthesis (2024).

Discussion: Policy Implications

The converging findings across all five analytical dimensions present a coherent and consistent portrait of systemic policy failure not the failure of individual programs or officials, but a structural failure of governance architecture to address the multidimensional and intersectional character of karawo craftswomen's economic disempowerment. This conclusion aligns with the World Bank's (2021) global assessment of women's economic empowerment programs, which finds that holistic, integrated approaches produce three times the economic impact of single-domain interventions, yet remain a minority model among actual government programs.

The IHEEF framework proposed by this study represents a direct response to this governance deficit. Critically, the framework is not merely additive recommending that more programs be added to an already fragmented landscape but integrative, proposing a governance redesign in which Gorontalo Province establishes a Karawo Women's Economic Empowerment Coordination Unit (KWEEC) under the Governor's office, with a mandate to coordinate all karawo-related programs, establish joint monitoring and evaluation systems, and ensure craftswomen's participatory representation in policy formulation. This institutional innovation addresses the linking social capital deficit identified in the research while operationalizing Fraser's (2020) representation dimension of economic empowerment.

The finding that community-embedded, culturally sensitive training is significantly more effective than externally designed programs reinforces Nussbaum's (2011) argument that capability development must be contextually specific and dignity-preserving. It also speaks to the growing global evidence base on asset-based community development (Mathie & Cunningham, 2021), which argues that sustainable economic development must build from communities' existing strengths, knowledge, and cultural assets rather than treating beneficiaries as repositories of deficits to be remedied.

Comparatively, this study's findings align with and extend recent scholarship on artisan women's economic empowerment across the Global South. Manuh et al. (2022) document comparable patterns of policy fragmentation and gender-blind evaluation in Ghana's kente weaving communities; Kabeer and Mahmud (2023) identify similar social capital dynamics among Bangladesh's garment home-workers; and Srilatha (2021) demonstrates analogous capacity-market disconnects in India's handloom sector. The IHEEF framework, therefore, offers not only locally relevant policy guidance for Gorontalo Province but a transferable analytical and governance model applicable to comparable artisan community development contexts internationally.

Table 4. Integrated Policy Recommendations Based on IHEEF Framework

Priority	Policy Intervention	Target Group	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
1	Integrated credit access scheme for karawo craftswomen	All karawo craftswomen	Increased capital access by 60%	Short-term (1-2 yr)
2	Digital marketing and e-commerce capacity training	Craftswomen 18-45 years	30% increase in sales revenue	Short-term (1-2 yr)
3	Strengthening karawo cooperatives and artisan networks	Cooperative members	Improved social capital index	Medium-term (2-4 yr)
4	Gender-responsive budgeting in local economic programs	Local government agencies	Equitable resource allocation	Medium-term (2-4 yr)
5	Certification and quality standards for karawo products	Producers and exporters	Market premium and brand value	Long-term (4-6 yr)
6	Integrated holistic economic empowerment framework	All stakeholders	Systemic economic equality	Long-term (4-6 yr)

Source: Compiled from empirical findings and IHEEF framework (2024).

CONCLUSION

This study has systematically investigated the structural and institutional dimensions of economic disempowerment among karawo women craftswomen in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia, through an integrated holistic social approach grounded in feminist political economy, social capital theory, and the human capability framework. The qualitative phenomenological inquiry, involving 45 participants across multiple data collection modalities, produced a comprehensive thematic map of the barriers, gaps, and enablers that characterize the karawo sector's empowerment landscape.

Four principal conclusions emerge from the research. First, economic marginalization among karawo craftswomen is structurally reproduced through interlocking mechanisms of financial exclusion, gendered property norms, and labor market undervaluation, rather than being attributable to individual capability deficits. Second, social capital assets particularly bonding capital among craftswomen and bridging capital to institutional actors are unevenly distributed and frequently undermined by institutional distrust generated by performative, non-participatory policy implementation. Third, policy fragmentation across at least six Organizational Units, combined with the absence of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation, produces an incoherent governance environment that generates outputs without sustainable development outcomes. Fourth, community-embedded, culturally sensitive capacity development and functioning cooperative structures represent significant empowerment assets that a redesigned policy architecture must recognize and amplify.

The Integrated Holistic Economic Empowerment Framework (IHEEF) proposed by this study represents a theoretically grounded and empirically validated governance innovation for addressing these systemic challenges. The framework's six pillars financial inclusion, social capital development, gender-responsive governance, capacity building, market integration, and multi-stakeholder coordination are not independent recommendations but constitute an integrated system in which each pillar reinforces the others. Future research should focus on longitudinal assessment of IHEEF implementation outcomes, comparative analysis across Indonesian provinces with similar artisan communities, and feminist evaluation methodology development for gender-responsive policy assessment in the creative economy sector.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, E.R. and R.M.; Methodology, E.R. and R.M.; Investigation, E.R. and R.M.; Data Collection, E.R. and R.M.; Formal Analysis, E.R. and R.M.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, E.R. and R.M.; Writing – Review & Editing, E.R. and R.M.; Visualization, E.R. and R.M.; Supervision, R.M.; Project Administration, E.R.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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