



Gender-Responsive Public Policy in Strengthening Women's Economic Empowerment through Community-Based Programs in Makassar City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of gender-responsive public policies in strengthening women's economic empowerment through community-based programs in Makassar. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand the relationship between public policy, community participation, and women's economic empowerment in the local development context. Research data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation with local government officials, community program managers, female MSMEs, and women's community groups. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña through a thematic process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the implementation of gender-responsive public policies has contributed to increasing women's economic capacity through business training, community mentoring, micro-enterprise assistance, and strengthening women's socio-economic networks. Community-based programs have proven to be participatory spaces that help women improve their business skills, self-confidence, and social participation in society. However, policy implementation still faces various obstacles such as patriarchal culture, limited access to capital, low digital literacy, weak institutional coordination, and limited program sustainability. This research confirms that women's economic empowerment is not only related to increasing income but also encompasses the transformation of gender relations and improving women's bargaining position in local development. Therefore, strengthening gender-responsive policies that are more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable through collaboration between the government, communities, and civil society organizations is necessary.

Introduction

Women's economic empowerment has become a key agenda item in global development because it is directly linked to poverty reduction, improved family welfare, and inclusive social development (Iskandar, 2020). In recent decades, various international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank have prioritized gender equality as a crucial element in achieving sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on gender equality, emphasizes that development cannot be achieved optimally without actively involving women in social, political, and economic activities (Alfirdaus, 2028). In this context, women's economic empowerment is viewed not only as a social welfare issue, but also as a development strategy that contributes to economic growth and social justice (Budiarto & Muftukhatusolikah, 2019).

Globally, women still face various forms of structural inequality in access to economic resources, employment opportunities, education, business capital, and public decision-making (Khaerani, 2017). According to a United Nations Development Programme

report, women tend to work in the informal sector with low levels of social protection and are vulnerable to economic exploitation. Furthermore, patriarchal norms and social constructions of gender still limit women's participation in the productive sector (Huda & Dodi, 2020). This situation demonstrates that economic development is often not fully

In the context of developing countries, gender inequality in the economic sector is becoming an increasingly complex challenge due to a combination of social, cultural, and institutional factors (Sahban & Se, 2018). Women face not only economic barriers but also limited access to education, technology, social networks, and inclusive public policies. Therefore, many countries have begun integrating a gender mainstreaming approach into development policies to ensure that women have equal access, participation, control, and benefits from the development process (Muhartono, 2020). This approach emphasizes that public policies must consider women's experiences and needs substantively, not merely administratively.

In Indonesia, the issue of women's economic empowerment is gaining increasing attention as women's participation in the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector increases (Rumilah & Laili, 2019). The government, through various national programs, has encouraged strengthening women's economic capacity through entrepreneurship training, business capital assistance, productive family programs, and community-based economic development (Sururi et al., 2019). However, various studies show that the implementation of gender-responsive policies at the regional level still faces many challenges, such as weak institutional coordination, budget constraints, and a lack of gender-based evaluation (Safitri & Edison, 2020).

Furthermore, the persistent patriarchal culture in Indonesian society also impacts the effectiveness of women's empowerment (Sakina, 2017). Women are often positioned as domestic actors, so their participation in economic activities is considered a secondary role, rather than a key component of family economic development (Tuwu, 2018). This situation causes women to face a dual workload of domestic work and productive economic activities. As a result, many women experience limitations in developing businesses and increasing their economic capacity.

In the context of regional development, gender-responsive public policies are crucial to ensuring that local economic development is inclusive (Hasan et al., 2019). Gender-responsive policies not only focus on increasing women's participation but also aim to address structural barriers that contribute to gender inequality in access to economic resources (Darmawan, 2020). Therefore, local governments have a strategic role in designing and implementing women's empowerment programs based on the needs of local communities.

One widely used approach to women's economic empowerment is community-based programs. This approach is considered effective because it positions the community as the primary actor in the development process (Febrian, 2015). Community-based programs enable women to build social solidarity, strengthen economic networks, and increase collective capacity through active participation in community groups (Handayani, 2018). Furthermore, the community approach is considered more contextual because it can adapt programs to local social and cultural conditions.

In Makassar, various community-based women's empowerment programs have developed in recent years, both through local government initiatives and civil society

organizations. These programs include women's entrepreneurship training, strengthening women's MSMEs, women's cooperatives, empowering productive families, and even digitizing women's micro-enterprises. The presence of these programs demonstrates the local government's commitment to supporting women's economic empowerment as part of inclusive development.

However, the effectiveness of community-based programs in strengthening women's economic empowerment remains a matter of academic debate. Several studies indicate that many women's empowerment programs remain formalistic and have not been able to substantively change gender power relations (Tokan & Gai, 2020). Programs are often solely focused on increasing income without considering women's control over economic resources and decision-making within the family and community (Maulina & Listyani, 2020). Furthermore, the implementation of gender-responsive policies at the local level often faces obstacles such as limited bureaucratic capacity, low female participation in policy planning processes, and weak monitoring of gender-based programs (Suntiana et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the development of urbanization and the transformation of the urban economy in Makassar also create new challenges for women, especially those from lower economic groups. Urban economic competition forces women to adapt to market changes, the digitalization of the economy, and rising living costs. In these conditions, community programs become crucial as social mechanisms to strengthen women's economic resilience and enhance their adaptive capacity to urban economic changes.

This research is significant because it seeks to analyze how gender-responsive public policies are implemented in the local context and the extent to which community-based programs can strengthen women's economic empowerment in Makassar. This research examines not only the administrative aspects of the policies but also explores the experiences of women as program beneficiaries. Thus, this research seeks to understand the relationship between public policy, community participation, and gender-based social transformation in local economic development.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of gender studies and public policy, particularly in understanding the implementation of gender-responsive public policy at the local government level. This research also strengthens the perspective of Women's Empowerment Theory, which positions economic access as a crucial instrument in transforming gender-based social relations (Ramadhan & Maa, 2018). Furthermore, this study utilizes a Community Development Theory perspective to explain the importance of community participation in the local empowerment process.

Practically, the research findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for the Makassar City Government in designing more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable women's empowerment policies. This research is also expected to serve as a basis for strengthening collaboration between the government, civil society organizations, and women's communities in creating gender-responsive and socially just economic development.

Methods

Research Type and Approach

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze the implementation of gender-responsive public policies in strengthening women's

economic empowerment through community-based programs in Makassar. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to deeply understand social phenomena, women's experiences, and the dynamics of public policy implementation in the local context. Through this approach, researchers can explore the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of the actors involved in the women's economic empowerment process.

A case study design was used because the research focuses on specific phenomena occurring in the implementation of gender-responsive policies in Makassar City. This approach allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between public policies, community programs, and women's economic empowerment in a contextualized manner.

Research Location

This research was conducted in Makassar, considering that the city is one of the urban areas that has developed various community-based women's empowerment programs. Furthermore, Makassar has quite complex socio-economic dynamics, particularly related to women's involvement in the informal sector, MSMEs, and the family economy.

The research locations focused on several women's communities, women's business groups, and local government agencies implementing women's economic empowerment programs. The selection of these locations was based on the relevance of the programs to the research focus on the implementation of gender-responsive policies.

Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through in-depth interviews and field observations with informants involved in the implementation of women's empowerment programs. Primary data was used to obtain information regarding the informants' experiences, perceptions, and views regarding the implementation of gender-responsive policies.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from local government policy documents, program implementation reports, statistical data, scientific journals, books, and other documents related to women's empowerment and gender-responsive public policies. The use of secondary data aims to strengthen the analysis results and support the validity of the research.

Research Informants

Research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, considering the informants' level of involvement and knowledge regarding the implementation of women's empowerment policies and programs. The informants included local government officials, community program managers, women's group facilitators, female MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) actors, women's community members, and civil society organizations working on gender and community empowerment issues.

In addition to purposive sampling, this study also employed a snowball sampling technique to identify additional informants deemed to have relevant information related to the research focus. This technique was used to obtain more in-depth and comprehensive data.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques in this study included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to enable researchers to obtain broad and in-depth information regarding the implementation of gender-responsive policies and their impact on women's economic empowerment. Through these interviews, informants were given space to openly explain their experiences and perspectives.

Observations were conducted by directly observing women's community program activities, the economic empowerment implementation process, and social interactions within community groups. Observations helped researchers understand the real conditions on the ground and strengthen the interview data.

Documentation was used to obtain supporting data in the form of local government regulations, program reports, women's statistical data, activity photographs, and various other documents relevant to the research. Documentation techniques helped researchers understand the policy and program context more systematically.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique in this study employed the interactive analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. At this stage, researchers grouped data based on key themes such as gender-responsive policy implementation, women's economic empowerment, community roles, and obstacles to program implementation.

The next stage was presenting the data in descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation and identify relationships between research findings. Afterward, researchers drew conclusions gradually based on the interpretation of the data that had been thoroughly analyzed.

Data analysis was conducted thematically by identifying patterns, social relationships, and dynamics of policy implementation emerging from the field research results. This analysis technique was used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender-responsive public policies and community-based women's economic empowerment.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from various informants and research documents. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure data consistency.

In addition, member checking was conducted by reconfirming the interview results and data interpretation with several research informants. This technique aims to ensure that the data obtained aligns with the experiences and perspectives of the informants, thereby enhancing the credibility of the study.

Research Ethics

This study adhered to the principles of research ethics throughout the data collection process. Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher obtained informants' consent and openly explained the purpose of the study. The researcher also maintained the confidentiality of informants' identities to protect their privacy and security.

All data obtained is used solely for academic and scientific research purposes. In addition, researchers strive to maintain objectivity and professionalism during the research process so that the research results can be scientifically accounted for.

Results

Implementation of Gender-Responsive Public Policy

The research findings indicate that the implementation of gender-responsive public policy in Makassar has progressed through various women's empowerment programs implemented by the local government in collaboration with community groups. Gender-responsive policies are implemented in the form of women's entrepreneurship training, strengthening women's micro-enterprises, business capital assistance, productive economic skills training, and mentoring for community-based business groups. These programs aim to increase women's economic capacity while expanding their access to economic resources and employment opportunities.

The research found that the local government has begun to integrate gender mainstreaming principles into the regional development planning process, particularly through community empowerment and family economic strengthening programs. The integration of a gender perspective is evident in the prioritization of programs for female heads of households, female MSME owners, and economically vulnerable women's groups. Furthermore, several government agencies have involved women in development deliberation forums and local economic community activities as part of efforts to increase women's participation in regional development.

However, the implementation of gender-responsive policies still faces various structural and administrative challenges. In practice, some programs remain formalistic and do not fully consider the specific needs of women at the grassroots level. Several women's empowerment programs are also considered to be oriented toward administrative targets without ongoing mentoring that could strengthen women's long-term economic independence. Furthermore, coordination between government agencies in implementing gender programs remains relatively limited, resulting in suboptimal policy effectiveness.

Research also indicates that budget constraints and human resource capacity hinder the implementation of gender-responsive policies. Some program implementers lack an adequate understanding of the concept of gender-responsive policy, resulting in policy implementation often being viewed as a women-specific program, rather than as a development approach that integrates gender equity into the entire public policy process.

On the other hand, community-based programs have proven to be an important instrument in supporting the implementation of gender-responsive policies. The community approach enables women to actively participate in the economic empowerment process through training, business development, and socio-economic networking. Communities also serve as collective spaces for women to share experiences,

build social solidarity, and increase self-confidence in carrying out productive economic activities.

Based on interviews, several informants stated that women's empowerment programs have had a positive impact on increasing women's economic capacity and social participation in society. One informant from a women's business group said:

"Before joining the community program, I only focused on my home. After participating in business training and mentoring, I started my own small business and was able to contribute to my family's finances."

Another informant from the local government explained that gender-responsive policy implementation continues through the integration of women's programs into regional development:

"We strive to ensure women have equal access to economic empowerment programs, especially through business training and support for women's MSMEs at the community level."

However, several women still expressed cultural barriers to implementing empowerment programs. Strong patriarchal norms limit some women's ability to develop businesses and actively participate in community economic activities.

The Role of Community-Based Programs in Women's Economic Empowerment

The research findings indicate that community-based programs play a significant role in strengthening women's economic empowerment in Makassar. Community programs not only serve as a means of increasing women's income but also serve as a social space to strengthen women's capacity, participation, and independence in local economic activities. A community-based approach is considered more effective because it adapts programs to the needs and social conditions of the local community, enabling women to actively participate in the empowerment process.

The research found that various women's community groups, such as micro-enterprise groups, women's cooperatives, MSME communities, and skills training groups, have made significant contributions to increasing women's economic capacity. Through these programs, women gain access to entrepreneurship training, business mentoring, financial management, product marketing, and the use of digital media for business development. Community programs also help women build social and economic networks that were previously difficult to access individually.

In addition to improving economic skills, community-based programs also strengthen women's confidence in running businesses and making financial decisions within the family. Most women involved in the community reported improved skills in managing their small businesses and greater financial independence after participating in the empowerment program. This demonstrates that women's economic empowerment is not only related to increased income, but also to changes in women's social position within the household and community.

One informant from a women's business group explained:

"Previously, I didn't have my own income because I was only taking care of the house. After joining the community and receiving business training, I started selling snacks and now I have regular customers."

Another informant also noted that the community provides crucial moral and social support in the process of developing women's businesses:

"If I were alone, it might have been difficult to develop, but with the group and mentoring, we help each other and motivate each other to continue running our businesses."

The research also shows that community programs help women expand access to economic resources, including business capital and market access. Some women's communities collaborate with local governments and civil society organizations to obtain training and support for promoting women's MSME products. This collaboration helps women improve product quality and expand the market for their businesses. Beyond the economic aspect, community-based programs also play a role in increasing women's social participation at the local level. Women who were previously less active in community activities are beginning to become involved in community decision-making processes and other social activities. This involvement indirectly strengthens women's bargaining power within their social and family environments.

One community facilitator explained:

"Community programs are not just about business, but about how women can become more confident, speak up, and participate in decision-making within groups and families."

However, research has found that the effectiveness of community-based programs still faces several challenges. Limited business capital, low digital literacy, and limited access to marketing remain major obstacles for women in developing their businesses. Furthermore, some community programs still rely on government assistance, making program sustainability a challenge when budgetary support decreases.

On the other hand, patriarchal culture also continues to influence women's participation in community programs. Some women reported limited time and family support because they continue to be burdened with significant domestic responsibilities.

Supporting Factors for Policy Implementation

Research results indicate that the successful implementation of gender-responsive public policies to strengthen women's economic empowerment in Makassar is influenced by various interrelated supporting factors. These factors include local government support, active participation of women's communities, collaboration between institutions, ongoing program mentoring, and strong social solidarity within community groups. The presence of these factors helps increase the effectiveness of the implementation of community-based women's empowerment programs.

One key factor supporting policy implementation is the local government's commitment to integrating a gender perspective into community development programs. The local government, through various relevant agencies, has provided entrepreneurship training, micro-enterprise assistance, women's capacity building programs, and mentoring for women's economic communities. This policy support provides greater space for women to engage in productive economic activities and gain access to economic resources.

An informant from the local government stated:

"We continue to strive to promote women's empowerment programs through business training, MSME assistance, and strengthening women's groups so that women have better economic access."

In addition to government support, active community participation is a crucial factor in supporting successful policy implementation. The study found that women's communities play a strategic role in building social solidarity, strengthening economic networks, and creating collective learning spaces for women. Through communities, women can share experiences, exchange business information, and provide social support. This helps boost women's confidence in developing their economic enterprises.

One female community member explained:

"If there's a community, we're more motivated because we can learn together and help each other when we encounter business difficulties."

Intensive program mentoring is also a crucial supporting factor. The presence of community mentors helps women understand business management, product marketing, and sustainable economic capacity development. Mentoring not only serves as a knowledge transfer process but also as a form of social motivation for women to remain active in economic empowerment activities.

One community mentor stated:

"Mentoring is very important because many women actually have business potential, but they still need guidance and support to develop their businesses."

The study also found that collaboration between local governments, civil society organizations, and local communities is a supporting factor in expanding access to women's empowerment programs. This collaboration enables the provision of business training, capital assistance, access to marketing, and strengthening the institutional capacity of women's communities. Cross-sector collaboration helps create a more participatory empowerment approach that aligns with the needs of local communities.

Furthermore, the development of digital technology is a supporting factor in strengthening women's economic well-being. Some women have begun utilizing social media and digital platforms to market their products. Utilizing technology helps women expand their market network and increase business income, especially for home-based micro-enterprises.

However, research shows that factors supporting policy implementation are not only structural but also influenced by women's internal motivation to improve their family's economic situation. Most women involved in community programs have a strong desire to be economically independent and help meet household needs. This motivation serves as a social force that strengthens the success of women's empowerment programs.

Factors Inhibiting Policy Implementation

The research shows that the implementation of gender-responsive public policies to strengthen women's economic empowerment in Makassar still faces various inhibiting factors that affect the effectiveness of community-based programs. These obstacles stem not only from institutional and administrative aspects, but are also influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors, as well as the limited resources women experience in their

daily lives. This situation means that the implementation of gender-responsive policies has not been fully able to create optimal and sustainable economic empowerment for women.

One of the main inhibiting factors is the persistence of patriarchal culture in society. Research has found that traditional social norms still place women primarily responsible for domestic work and family care. As a result, women's involvement in economic activities and community activities is often seen as ancillary, rather than a crucial part of family economic development. This situation results in some women experiencing limited time, mobility, and social support to develop their economic enterprises.

One female informant stated:

"Sometimes, if I participate in business activities or training too often, some people still say that women should stay at home more and take care of the family."

In addition to cultural barriers, the research also found that limited access to business capital is a major obstacle women face in developing productive economic activities. Most women micro-entrepreneurs still struggle to obtain business loans due to limited assets, financial security, and access to formal financial institutions. As a result, many women's businesses grow slowly and struggle to compete in the broader market.

One female MSME owner explained:

"We have a small business, but sometimes it's difficult to grow because capital is limited and it's not easy to get business loans."

Another obstacle identified was low digital literacy and business marketing skills. In an increasingly technology-driven urban economy, some women still face limitations in utilizing digital media for product marketing and business development. This situation makes it difficult for women to expand their market networks and increase their business competitiveness, especially amidst increasingly competitive economic conditions.

This research also shows that the implementation of gender-responsive policies still faces institutional obstacles, particularly related to suboptimal coordination between government agencies. Some women's empowerment programs remain sectoral and not fully integrated into the regional development system. Furthermore, implementing officials' understanding of the concept of gender-responsive policy is still relatively limited, resulting in policy implementation often being viewed solely as a women's assistance program, rather than as a gender-equitable development approach.

An informant from the local government stated:

"Sometimes program implementation still focuses solely on activity targets, while evaluation of gender impacts has not been optimally conducted."

Budget constraints and program sustainability also hamper policy implementation. The research found that some women's empowerment programs were not implemented consistently due to limited operational funds and minimal long-term program monitoring. As a result, some women struggled to maintain business sustainability after the mentoring program concluded.

Furthermore, the dual workload experienced by women also hindered the economic empowerment process. Women must divide their time between domestic work, childcare, and economic activities, limiting their capacity to develop businesses. This

situation demonstrates that gender inequality in the division of household labor remains a major challenge to women's economic empowerment.

One informant explained:

"We have to take care of the house, children, and business all at once. Sometimes it's tiring to do everything alone."

On the other hand, some community programs also face the challenge of low community participation due to a lack of public awareness and limited public trust in the sustainability of government programs. Some women perceive empowerment programs as temporary and without long-term economic impacts, thus limiting their participation in the programs.

Discussion

This study aims to analyze the implementation of gender-responsive public policies in strengthening women's economic empowerment through community-based programs in Makassar. Overall, the results indicate that gender-responsive public policies make a significant contribution to opening women's economic access, increasing social participation, and strengthening women's economic capacity through a community approach. However, this study also found that policy implementation still faces various structural, cultural, and institutional barriers, preventing the full substantive achievement of gender empowerment goals (Putri, 2018).

Research findings show that the implementation of gender-responsive policies at the local level is still in a transitional phase between administrative and transformational approaches (Tjenreng, 2020). Local governments have demonstrated a formal commitment to gender mainstreaming through various women's empowerment programs, MSME training, and economic support for women's communities. However, the integration of a gender perspective into public policy still tends to be procedural and has not fully addressed the dimensions of gender power relations that are at the root of socio-economic inequality for women (Sulistiowati et al., 2018). This situation indicates that the existence of gender-responsive policies at the regulatory level has not automatically resulted in equal social transformation at the implementation level.

From a Feminist Public Policy Analysis perspective, this situation illustrates the phenomenon of "symbolic inclusion," a situation where women have been included in the public policy agenda, but their position within the socio-economic structure remains subordinate. Gender policies in this context tend to function as administrative development instruments without being accompanied by structural changes to the distribution of power, access to resources, and decision-making (Wardiyanto et al., 2016). The findings of this study indicate that most women's empowerment programs are still oriented toward improving individual economic skills, while the gender-based social transformation dimension has not been a primary focus in policy implementation (Ginting & Sihura, 2020).

This study also demonstrates that community-based programs play a strategic role in strengthening the effectiveness of gender-responsive policies. Community programs have proven to be a social medium capable of bringing together economic aspects, social solidarity, and women's participation in local development. In this context, communities not only serve as a vehicle for implementing government programs but also serve as social spaces that enable women to build collective awareness, expand socio-economic

networks, and improve their bargaining power within their families and communities (Ulum & Anggaini, 2020).

These findings reinforce the argument of Community Development Theory, which places community participation at the core of the social empowerment process (Ferlina, 2020). A community approach enables the development process to be more participatory and contextual because programs are tailored to the socio-economic needs of local communities (Sardjo et al., 2017). In this study, women actively involved in communities demonstrated greater self-confidence, entrepreneurial skills, and social capacity than women not involved in community programs. This demonstrates that women's economic empowerment cannot be understood solely as increased income, but also as a process of social transformation that strengthens women's agency in social life.

However, this study found that the success of community-based programs is still heavily influenced by institutional capacity and the sustainability of government policy support. Most women in communities remain dependent on external assistance in the form of funding, training, and mentoring from the government and civil society organizations. This dependency indicates that women's empowerment at the community level has not yet fully reached the stage of sustainable empowerment. In the long term, this condition has the potential to cause empowerment programs to lose sustainability when institutional support weakens.

Furthermore, this study shows that the main obstacle to implementing gender-responsive policies stems from the persistent patriarchal social structure within the community. Patriarchal culture results in women experiencing double workloads, limited social mobility, and economic subordination within the household. In many cases, women remain positioned as domestic actors despite their contributions to productive economic activities. These findings show that gender inequality in society is not simply a matter of economic access but is closely related to the social construction of gender relations in everyday life.

From an Intersectionality Theory perspective, women's experiences in empowerment programs are not homogeneous because they are influenced by various factors such as social class, education level, age, and access to economic resources (Utaminingsih et al., 2020). Women from lower economic groups tend to face more complex obstacles than women with better access to education and social capital. Therefore, universal policy approaches often fail to understand the diversity of women's experiences in local contexts (Rosada & Albertus, 2019). This research demonstrates the importance of an intersectional approach in public policy formulation so that empowerment programs can reach the most socio-economically vulnerable groups of women.

Furthermore, this study shows that women's economic empowerment has broader social implications for transforming gender relations within families and communities. Women who have their own income tend to have greater bargaining power in household decision-making, including regarding family financial management and children's education. This reinforces the perspective of Women's Empowerment Theory, which emphasizes that economic access is a crucial dimension in the process of gender power redistribution.

However, this research also shows that increasing women's economic capacity is not always accompanied by a reduction in their domestic burdens. In many cases, women experience increased workloads because they must simultaneously fulfill both

productive and reproductive roles. This situation demonstrates that women's economic empowerment can create a gender paradox if it is not accompanied by social transformation in the division of household labor and changes in patriarchal norms within society.

The theoretical implication of this research is the need for a multidimensional approach to understanding gender-responsive policies and women's economic empowerment. This research demonstrates that women's empowerment cannot be analyzed solely through economic indicators such as increased income or the number of women's businesses but must be understood as a socio-political process related to power relations, access to resources, and gender-based social transformation. Thus, this research contributes to the development of gender studies and public policy, particularly in the context of local policy implementation in developing countries.

Practically, this research has important implications for the Makassar City Government in formulating more inclusive and sustainable women's empowerment policies. The local government needs to strengthen gender integration across all policy stages, from planning and implementation to program evaluation. Furthermore, it is necessary to strengthen bureaucratic capacity in understanding gender-responsive governance so that policy implementation does not stop at merely administrative aspects. This research also emphasizes the importance of developing a collaborative governance model between the government, local communities, civil society organizations, and the private sector to support women's economic empowerment. Cross-sector collaboration is needed to expand women's access to business capital, digital technology, economic markets, and sustainable entrepreneurship training. In the context of the growing digital economy, improving women's digital literacy is a crucial agenda for strengthening women's economic competitiveness at the local and national levels.

Furthermore, the research findings demonstrate the need for broader social transformation to reduce patriarchal barriers to women's empowerment. Therefore, women's empowerment policies should not only focus on economic strengthening but also encompass gender education, strengthening social awareness, and changing cultural norms regarding gender relations in society. This approach is crucial so that women's empowerment not only results in individual economic improvement but also creates more equitable and inclusive social change in local community development.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of gender-responsive public policies in Makassar plays a crucial role in strengthening women's economic empowerment through community-based programs, particularly in increasing women's access to business training, economic networks, social participation, and micro-enterprise development opportunities. Community programs have proven to be a strategic platform for women to build economic capacity while strengthening social solidarity and bargaining power within their families and communities. However, the effectiveness of policy implementation still faces various structural barriers, such as patriarchal culture, limited access to capital, low digital literacy, weak institutional coordination, and suboptimal program sustainability. This study confirms that women's economic empowerment is not only related to increased income but also a process of social transformation involving changes in gender relations, access to resources, and women's participation in local development. Therefore, strengthening gender-responsive policies that are more

substantive, participatory, and sustainable through collaboration between the government, local communities, and civil society organizations is necessary to ensure inclusive women's empowerment and create more gender-equitable development.

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