

Strategic Role Of Women In Preserving Culture And Enhancing Family Economy

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the extent to which women can preserve the cultural heritage of weaving and enhance family economy. This research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological perspective. Data collection is done through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis follows a four-step process: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity test of the data includes: (1) data credibility, (2) transferability (external validation/generalization), (3) dependability (reliability), and (4) confirmability (objectivity). The results of the study indicate that women play a crucial role in preserving the weaving cultural heritage of Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi, which is one of the educational tourism destinations and specialty souvenirs, and significantly contributes to enhancing the family economy as weavers, which is their primary occupation.

Keywords: Women, Silk Woven Fabric, Culture, Family Economy, Entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

Silk weaving has become one of the rich forms of art and tradition in various parts of the world, recognized for its beauty and cultural significance (Pagán et al., 2020). Silk fabric, produced from silkworm fibers, is renowned for its soft texture, enchanting luster, and high durability. Since ancient times, silk weaving has been used for various purposes, from clothing to home decor, and often serves as a symbol of social status in certain cultures. In many societies, the process of creating silk weaving is seen as more than just a craft; it is a cultural heritage that involves various rituals, meanings, and stories interwoven into every thread (SULOLIPU et al., 2022)(Inanna et al.,

398

IJEVSS, Volume 04 Issue 02, 2025



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2020b).

In the present context of globalization, the silk weaving sector encounters substantial problems, including competition from synthetic alternatives and evolving consumer preferences. Nonetheless, the conventional ideals of silk weaving remain esteemed and upheld, particularly in communities where cultural preservation is paramount (Lu et al., 2021). As awareness of sustainability and ethics in fashion grows, silk weaving has re-emerged as a product that is both aesthetically pleasing and historically significant. This indicates that silk weaving retains its significance in contemporary society and continues to symbolize the cultural richness of the Donggala Regency community (RIDWAN et al., 2023)(Warhime, 2024).

The weavers, particularly women, are crucial in preserving the longstanding weaving skills. They participate in the complete production process, from the selection of premium silk raw materials to the eco-friendly natural dyeing procedure (Khakhlari, 2020). Their proficiency and accuracy in organizing patterns and motifs render each Donggala silk woven product distinctive and highly valuable. By engaging in continuous training and education, women enhance their technical competencies and innovate by developing new designs that align with market preferences, so enabling broader competition.

Conversely, the presence of the Donggala silk weaving sector enhances the familial economy. When these woven products are sold, both nationally and internationally, women acquire substantial income to enhance their financial resources. Furthermore, they work in collaborative business organizations that facilitate the sharing of resources, experiences, and marketing tactics. This not only fortifies the domestic economy but also enhances the social status of women within the community, fostering their empowerment and autonomy in a society still shaped by traditional norms (Prasannath et al., 2024)(Arifin et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, despite the significant potential of the Donggala silk weaving sector, the problems encountered by women in sustaining this enterprise are notably intricate. Globalization and shifts in consumer behavior pose a challenge to traditional woven items, since mass production and inexpensive imports serve as primary competitors. Consequently, it is essential to investigate how women in Donggala Regency might leverage their cultural identity and distinctive methodologies as a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. This study on Donggala silk weaving aims to elucidate the tactics employed by women to sustain relevance and endure prevailing obstacles, while simultaneously preserving and honoring their cultural legacy and the role of women in enhancing the family economy (Ingalagi et al., 2021).

Moreover, numerous studies emphasize the achievements of women in crafts while



neglecting to examine the elements that affect the longevity of their enterprises. The inquiry pertains to how women in Donggala Regency might integrate tradition and innovation in sustainable design, as well as how they collaborate to confront the economic issues they encounter (Agarwal et al., 2022)(Gonçalves & Ahumada, 2025). This study aims to address the existing knowledge gap by offering a comprehensive analysis that encompasses not only the economic perspective but also the social and cultural factors influencing women's experiences in the silk weaving industry. By comprehending these relationships, we can recognize silk weaving not just as a cultural artifact but also as a vehicle for women's economic empowerment within society. This study primarily investigates the strategic role of women in the Donggala silk weaving industry, emphasizing two critical aspects: the preservation of cultural heritage and the enhancement of family income (Park et al., 2022)(Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022).

This study's conclusions aim to offer recommendations for stakeholders, including governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, to enhance women's empowerment in the silk weaving craft sector and to preserve local culture. This study aims to amplify women's experiences and roles, so reinforcing their societal standing and promoting broader measures for the advancement of a sustainable silk weaving sector.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach to investigate the strategic role of women in the Buya Sabe silk weaving industry and its effects on cultural preservation and family economic enhancement. This research will engage female artisans, community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders through data gathering methods including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews will investigate women's experiences and perspectives regarding weaving culture and its economic implications. Focus group discussions will offer a collective viewpoint from women's organizations, whereas participant observation will enable researchers to comprehend social interactions among artisans.

The gathered data will undergo analysis with (Miles & Huberman, 1994) methodologies, which encompass interview transcription, coding, and the formulation of significant themes. The criteria for participant selection will employ purposive sampling to guarantee a range of experiences. This study will also focus on ethics, encompassing informed permission and the secrecy of participant identities. This method aims to elucidate the role of women in the Buya Sabe silk weaving industry and their contributions to the preservation of familial culture and



economy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research result

Silk entrepreneurs in Donggala Regency are indigenous individuals with decades of weaving experience. Women also engage in weaving activities. Weaving is seen as a feminine occupation due to the necessity for meticulousness and precision, as well as the requirement for patience and perseverance to achieve the required quality of the woven cloth, a tradition that has persisted from ancient times to the present. To date, no male weavers have been identified, as weaving is regarded as a female occupation among the inhabitants of Donggala Regency, a custom that has been perpetuated through generations.

"Weaving is a profession designated for women, as all individuals engaged in this craft here are female, due to the necessity for meticulousness and patience to ensure the quality of the silk fabric produced." "Weaving is a female occupation, and all individuals engaged in this craft here are women, as the process requires meticulous attention and patience to ensure the quality of the silk fabric produced."

The presence of silk weaving enterprises enables women in Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi to secure employment, allowing housewives to generate their own income and reduce reliance on their husbands as primary providers (Horst, n.d.). This instills confidence in housewives who become silk entrepreneurs as they contribute to the family's economic endeavors (Batuaji et al., 2023). Weaving activities do not disrupt family responsibilities, allowing housewives to fulfill their primary duties as mothers and wives.



Picture 1. Female silk weaver

In Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi, weaving activities are predominantly performed by women, making them a common pillar of familial support (Inanna et al., 2020a). (Sashikumar, 2015) asserts that "The silk weaving business is a sustainable and labor-intensive economic activity for women." Women can generate novel and inventive concepts for managing silk weaving enterprises, particularly in the diversification of themes and colors in silk production. Empowering women in business is an effective strategy for enhancing their talents (Zhang et al., 2025) (Widiastuti et al., 2024). (Saavedra, 2024) asserts that "women's entrepreneurship in the weaving industry significantly impacts the business sector and societal welfare."

The cost of Donggala silk cloth is considerably high, which indirectly affects the earnings of silk entrepreneurs. Despite the lengthy production procedure, the outcomes sufficiently enhance family revenue. According to the findings from interviews with primary informants:

"Each month, my weaving generates an income of 800,000 to 1,200,000 from the sale of a single silk cloth." We can make only one silk fabric each month, as the production of a single silk cloth requires one month of weaving time. Provided that I engage in weaving daily. The silk fabric I weave is authentic silk, hence it must be crafted using a gedogan loom. (MN, 41)

"I contribute to my family's economy by weaving, as my husband's income as a construction worker is variable each month." Occasionally, there is some; at other times, there is none. Nonetheless, I derive a stable monthly income ranging from 800,000 to 1,200,000 from the sale of silk cloth, which I utilize to fulfill my essential demands. It is essential that fundamental needs are satisfied; a smokey kitchen is exceptional. (RS, 35)

The price of silk fabric is favorable, sustaining the demand for silk weaving among housewives as a supplementary income source for their families, despite the relatively modest earnings due to substantial capital investment and the time-intensive nature of producing each silk cloth (Manolo et al., 2020). Besides the relatively elevated cost, cultural factors significantly impact the viability of the silk weaving industry. Weaving practices are crucial to preserving the cultural heritage that has been upheld for generations (Chai-Arayalert et al., 2021). Silk fabric is required attire for the community, particularly during traditional ceremonies, like weddings and funerals. The utilization of silk fabric during an occasion signifies reverence for the Kaili people. In every traditional function, individuals are frequently observed utilizing silk fabric as garments or waist coverings. Silk fabric continues to be utilized by the community during holidays to this day.

"Weaving is integral to preserving our culture, as silk weaving is a heritage passed



down from our ancestors." In all traditional ceremonies, including weddings, cultural events, and funerals, it is important for participants to don silk garments as a sign of respect within the Kaili tribe. Despite our financial constraints, we nonetheless endeavor to possess silk fabric, even if it is merely a single piece. Individuals unable to purchase silk fabric must exhibit ingenuity in weaving to create silk cloth for their own use. (MN, 41)

The informant indicated that culture significantly influences the sustainability of silk weaving enterprises in Donggala Regency, hence indirectly enhancing the welfare of the populace. The weaving culture equips individuals with skills that enhance their livelihoods, while the practice of utilizing silk cloth as obligatory attire for events such as weddings and funerals ensures its continued existence (Sarwono et al., 2023)(Glogar et al., 2025).

Culture positively influences the advancement of silk weaving enterprises in Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi. Silk fabric is an official attire for cultural activities in Donggala Regency, including weddings, funerals, and other cultural events, where designs and colors significantly influence silk craftsmanship, particularly among the Kaili tribe, the indigenous group of Donggala Regency. Furthermore, culture does not prevent silk entrepreneurs from inventing. This is one of the reasons why silk weaving enterprises continue to thrive today.

"Individuals commonly utilize silk fabric in diverse traditional events, including weddings, aqiqahs, ceremonial occasions, and governmental functions." (FN, 44)

This aligns with the perspective of (Imaniar et al., 2020), which asserts that the sustainability of the silk weaving industry is intrinsically linked to cultural support, as it represents a local genius that fosters creativity, productivity, and income for the community. According to (Santo, 2015), the silk craft industry may contribute to sustainable development and hence requires preservation. The silk craft industry represents a unique local potential, as its designs and colors have profound philosophical significance reflective of the actual circumstances of the Donggala Regency community. Preserving the silk weaving enterprise as a means of safeguarding cultural heritage (Chai-Arayalert et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Silk fabric crafted by female artisans on traditional looms with authentic silk material requires an extensive manufacturing procedure, resulting in a high price for silk. Consequently, Donggala Buya Sabe silk fabric is predominantly accessible to the upper middle class. Conversely, the production of Donggala silk fabric serves as a means of cultural preservation and contributes



to enhancing the family economy. From a social standpoint, prolonged engagement in silk weaving diminishes competition among silk businesses, so preserving the communal value of solidarity.

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