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GENDER RELATIONS OF WOMEN BATIK MAKERS IN A CIVIC ECONOMY: A GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE FROM GIRILOYO BATIK VILLAGE

Madinah[1a]*, Samsuri[2b], Wuri Handayani[3c]

[1]Magister Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
[2]Program Studi Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
[3]Program Studi Ilmu Politik, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

[a]*E-mail: madinah.2024@student.unty.ac.id*
[b]*E-mail: samsuri@uny.ac.id*
[c]*E-mail: wuri.handayani@uny.ac.id*

(*) Corresponding Author
madinah.2024@student.unty.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the gender relations that shape the position of women batik makers within civic economy practices in Giriloyo Batik Village, Wukirsari, Imogiri, Bantul, using a Gender and Development (GAD) perspective. A hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative design was applied. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with fifteen informants, participatory observation, and documentation, and validity was established through source, technique, and time triangulation. The findings reveal a critical paradox: women batik makers have high access to resources directly tied to batik production, yet their control over strategic family decisions, particularly capital and assets, remains constrained by patriarchal structures. Even so, women negotiate this constraint gradually and without direct confrontation, through economic contribution, involvement in the association, and flexible working hours. The study proposes two original concepts, cultural-economic gender negotiation and the reciprocal economic-gender effect, to explain how the strengthening of women's economic autonomy organically drives the transformation of gender relations from within the family and community, carrying positive implications for SDG 5. This study affirms that gender transformation in culture-based communities can unfold bottom-up through local economic institutions, rather than solely through external policy intervention.

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INTRODUCTION

Women have long formed the backbone of culture-based economies in many parts of the world, yet their contribution is rarely matched by comparable recognition. The International Labour Organization (2023) reports that women dominate the informal economy and local-wisdom-based creative industries precisely the sectors least captured in official development statistics (International Labour Organization, 2023). In Indonesia, Badan Pusat Statistik (2025) recorded a continued rise in women's labor force participation over three consecutive periods, from 56.42% in August 2024 to 56.63% in August 2025, even as men's participation declined over the same period (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2025).

Rising economic participation, however, has not automatically been followed by a comparable shift in gender relations. (Fakih, 1996) explains that gender injustice manifests through marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, and the double burden the demand that women work productively while still carrying domestic responsibilities in full, with neither role reduced to accommodate the other. This phenomenon grows more complex among women working in culture-based industries such as batik, where economic activity is closely interwoven with the responsibility of preserving an inherited tradition.

Giriloyo Batik Village, Wukirsari, Imogiri, Bantul, offers a fitting context in which to examine this issue. Of the 643 batik makers registered with the Giriloyo Batik Tulis Association in 2026, 635 (98.76%) are women (Paguyuban Batik Tulis Giriloyo, 2026). The village's history is inseparable from the earthquake of 27 May 2006, which transformed the status of most batik makers from raw-batik labourers working for merchants in the city into entrepreneurs who now manage the entire chain, from production to marketing, through their own association.

To understand this transformation of gender relations, the study draws on the Gender and Development (GAD) perspective. Since the 1950s, the welfare approach positioned women as passive beneficiaries of development policy, resting on the untested assumption that economic growth would automatically "trickle down" to women without any need for targeted intervention (Buvinic et al., 1984). Criticism of that assumption gave rise, in the early 1970s, to the Women in Development (WID) approach, which pushed for women's more active involvement in development projects and programmes yet WID still tended to treat women as an isolated target group, without genuinely addressing the power relations between men and women that lie at the root of the problem. It was this limitation that led Caroline O.N. Moser to introduce the GAD framework in 1985, growing out of the dynamics of policy and programming for low-income women in third-world countries. Unlike WID, GAD places the social relations between men and women and the power structures that shape them at the centre of analysis (Rathgeber, 1989).

(Moser, 2012) further distinguishes between practical gender needs, which merely meet existing roles, and strategic gender needs, which involve structural change in the control of resources and positions of power a distinction that later analysis in this article treats as an essential lens for reading the experience of Giriloyo's women batik makers (Kabeer, 1999), meanwhile, frames empowerment as the interplay of three interlinked dimensions: resources, agency, and achievements. In a broader economic context, (Duflo, 2012) shows that women's empowerment carries a significant effect on family welfare and economic development more generally, not solely through higher income but also through a strengthened position in decision-making, a pattern this study also traces among the women batik makers of Giriloyo.

Prior studies on women in culture-based creative industries have generally stopped at measuring the scale of women's economic contribution, without sufficiently examining whether that contribution genuinely alters power relations within the family and community (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021; Dermawan, 2016). This study seeks to fill that gap by tracing, in detail, how gender relations are formed, negotiated, and transformed among the women batik makers of Giriloyo.

Building on this background, the study aims to analyze the gender relations that shape and influence the domestic, productive, and communal roles of women batik makers within the civic economy, and to identify the forms of gender negotiation they employ to expand their autonomy without directly confronting the patriarchal structures prevailing in their environment. The novelty of this article lies in three areas: it moves beyond measuring the scale of women's economic contribution to probe whether that contribution changes access to and control over resources; it systematically maps these patterns using the Harvard Analytical Framework, an approach rarely applied to home-based batik industries in Indonesia; and it conceptualizes two original findings that explain the mechanism of gender transformation from within a local economic

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institution, departing from the common assumption that substantive gender change requires external policy intervention (Wiebe, 1997).

Recent studies confirm that women's empowerment through batik remains a widely examined issue in Indonesia, albeit with differing emphases. (Yulinar & Winarni, 2024) studied a jumputan batik group in Piyungan, Bantul, the same regency as this study's site, finding effective empowerment in skills and income but limited attention to household gender dynamics. (Oktopiah & Mutmainah, 2024) and (Permata et al., 2024) similarly documented women's empowerment through batik training in Brebes and North Jakarta, focused primarily on economic independence rather than shifts in gendered power. The study closest to the present focus is (Derfiora & Hidayah, 2025), who examined gender transformation and women's agency in Giriloyo from an entrepreneurship perspective. This study complements that work with a more systematic access-control mapping and an explicit conceptualization of the mechanisms of gender transformation.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using hermeneutic (Heideggerian) phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962; Manen, 1990), chosen because the lived experience of Giriloyo's women batik makers in making sense of their gender relations cannot be separated from the historical, social, and cultural context of the village.

The study was conducted at the Giriloyo Batik Tulis Association, Wukirsari, Imogiri, Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta, over a three-month period (April–June 2026). Primary data were drawn from 15 women batik makers selected through purposive sampling, based on the criteria of having been actively engaged in batik-making for at least three years, holding membership in the Giriloyo batik group, and being willing to openly share their life experience. Primary data were supplemented by triangulation informants from the association's management, community leaders, and village officials, alongside secondary data in the form of village profile documents, national statistics, and association activity records.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation of production activities and association meetings, and documentation study. Each data source was coded (W for interview, O for observation, D for documentation) to protect informants' privacy while facilitating data tracking during analysis. Data validity was established through source, technique, and time triangulation, supported by member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretations matched informants' experiences. Data analysis proceeded through coding, identification of key themes, categorization, analysis of inter-thematic relationships, and conclusion drawing. To systematically map patterns of women's access and control, the study also adapted the Harvard Analytical Framework (Overholt et al., 1985).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Giriloyo Batik Village and Its Socioeconomic Context

Giriloyo Batik Village is located in Wukirsari Village, Imogiri District, Bantul Regency, approximately 17 kilometres south of the city of Yogyakarta, and comprises three hamlets: Giriloyo, Karangkulon, and Cengkehan. The batik tradition in this area is believed to date back to the construction of the Mataram royal cemetery complex in Imogiri in 1654, when some residents near the cemetery became court attendants and were introduced to the art of hand-drawn batik. For decades, Giriloyo's residents functioned merely as batik labourers selling unfinished cloth to traders in the city, without full control over dyeing, finishing, or marketing.

The earthquake of 27 May 2006, which devastated Yogyakarta's economy, became an unexpected turning point for Giriloyo. Support from several organizations, including Dompet Dhuafa, the Jogja Heritage Society, the Sekar Jagat Batik Foundation, and the Gotong Royong Foundation, encouraged the formation of independent, community-managed batik groups. This momentum was reinforced when Giriloyo's artisans set a MURI record for the world's longest batik scarf in 2007 and when UNESCO recognized batik as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2009, achievements that also helped Giriloyo gain recognition as a sustainable tourism village.

Today, the Giriloyo Hand-Drawn Batik Association coordinates twelve small batik enterprises organized into two coordination areas, with a vision of developing its members into professional artisans while establishing Giriloyo as a centre for the study of hand-drawn batik. Visitor data show a long-term upward trend, rising from 7,418 visitors in 2014 to 47,924 visitors in 2025, despite a sharp decline during the pandemic (2020–2021). This growth in tourism has been matched by

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rising annual revenue, from approximately IDR 1.2 billion in 2022 to IDR 3.3 billion in 2025, underscoring the position of the batik industry as the principal pillar of the local economy, sustained by women's participation.

Three Dimensions of Gender Relations in Giriloyo

Before turning to the specific patterns found among individual informants, it is worth mapping gender relations in Giriloyo across three interlocking dimensions economic, socio-political, and cultural through which the double burden identified by (Fakih, 1996) actually operates in daily life.

The economic dimension concerns a gendered division of labour that places women predominantly in the informal sector, home-based economic activity, and forms of work that go largely unmeasured in official output statistics, such as caregiving and reproductive labour. Access to capital, credit, and technology remains constrained by norms and regulations that are rarely gender-neutral in practice, even where they are neutral on paper. The socio-political dimension concerns how subordination rooted in patriarchal structure limits women's participation in public space and policy decisions; yet women are not passive in the face of this limitation. They develop various forms of agency through community organizations, collective advocacy, and everyday negotiation within the household. The cultural dimension, finally, concerns how local values and cultural identity shape a "natural order" for women that is passed down across generations. It is here that tension surfaces most visibly between the preservation of tradition and the demand for gender equality as in the batik industry, where women are praised as "custodians of culture" even as their wages and autonomy remain constrained.

These three dimensions do not operate in isolation; they interact continuously, and it is precisely their interaction that produces the layered, dynamic pattern of gender relations documented in the following sections.

Layered but Not Yet Equal: A Portrait of Gender Relations in Giriloyo

All 15 informants (100%) reported that they continue to perform household tasks cooking, cleaning, and childcare alongside their batik-making activities. What stands out is how they make sense of this dual role. One informant explained that only after cooking and seeing her children off to school does she pick up her canting, sometimes working on the porch while waiting for the children to return home; as she put it, it has become routine and no longer feels burdensome, since she has done it since childhood. Another informant, whose husband works in the rice field while she does the batik, noted that her income from batik is sometimes higher than his, yet household matters remain hers to handle a division of labour, she said, that the couple settled upon when they married.

These findings reinforce (Moser, 2012) argument on women's triple role in development reproductive (domestic), productive (economic), and community (social) all of which the women batik makers of Giriloyo carry out simultaneously. This condition confirms (Fakih, 1996) argument that the double burden is a structural issue shaped by social and cultural systems rather than something natural or innate. From a GAD perspective, this condition should be treated as a point for policy intervention, not accepted as an unquestioned norm.

It is worth underscoring here the distinction between sex, which is biological and universal, and gender, which is social, cultural, historical, and therefore changeable. Gender relations are inherently contextual: what counts as an appropriate "women's role" in Yogyakarta may differ from that in Aceh, even within the same nation. In Giriloyo specifically, gender relations cannot be read in binary terms neither wholly oppressive patriarchy nor fully realized equality but rather as a gradual process of transformation shaped by the confluence of post-earthquake economic pressure since 2006, the strengthening of the association as an institution, and cultural values deeply embedded in women's identity as batik makers.

The Access-and-Control Matrix: A Critical Paradox

Adapting the Harvard Analytical Framework, this study mapped women batik makers' access to and control over eight dimensions of resources, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Access and Control Matrix of Women Batik Makers in Giriloyo

Resource Dimension	Women's Access	Women's Control	Field Findings Note
Batik-making skills	High (100%)	Full	Passed down across generations; women are the sole teachers
Production tools	High	Medium	Canting and wax self-owned; wastewater treatment managed collectively

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Resource Dimension	Women's Access	Women's Control	Field Findings Note
Business capital	Medium-Low	Medium	Reliant on personal savings; formal credit access limited by spousal co-signature requirement
Income from batik	High	Medium-High	Mostly self-managed; in some family husbands help decide its use
Association deliberation	High	High	60% of administrators are women; decisions are collective and democratic
Digital marketing	Medium	Medium	Increasingly managed by women; still limited to a few individuals
Household business decisions	Medium	Low-Medium	Husbands still dominate major decisions (loans, asset purchases)

Source: Compiled from in-depth interviews and field observation, 2026

The table illustrates a paradox that stands as this study's central finding: women batik makers have high access to nearly all resources directly related to the batik-making process, yet their control over larger strategic decisions particularly involving capital and family assets remains constrained by patriarchal social construction. One association administrator, who now heads its cooperation division, captured this paradox well: within the association her voice is heard, but at home her husband remains the head of the family, each of them holding, in her words, “our own portion.”

Within (Kabeer, 1999) framework, women batik makers have experienced growth in resources (skills, social networks, independent income) and achievements (social status, community recognition), yet agency the capacity to act autonomously in major decisions remains a work in progress. This finding both confirms and extends (Moser, 2012) framework: practical gender needs access to skills, tools, and income are largely met, while strategic gender needs control over decisions involving capital and family assets remain in progress, underscoring the importance of distinguishing between these two categories in any women's empowerment initiative.

This study also found that women batik makers exercise a form of layered citizenship: full citizenship within the community-association domain, semi-autonomous citizenship within the family domain that is still being negotiated, and actively adaptive citizenship within the market domain that continues to evolve with these three layers interacting dynamically, in contrast to (Kabeer, 2020) more static notion of partial citizenship. What sets Giriloyo apart from the pattern of gender change commonly discussed in the GAD literature is the direction of change itself: most gender-empowerment programs are designed top-down through affirmative policy or external intervention (Rustam, 2023), whereas in Giriloyo change moves from within.

Three Forms of Gender Negotiation

Gender relations in Giriloyo are not static. This study identifies three forms of negotiation that women batik makers undertake gradually, without directly confronting patriarchal structures, showing that women are not entirely passive but active agents who exploit openings within the social system to expand their autonomy.

First, negotiation through economic contribution. The greater a woman's economic contribution from batik, the stronger her bargaining position in family decisions. One informant recalled that in the past she had to ask her husband whenever she wanted to buy anything; now, with her own money from batik, she is usually the one who buys what the children need, including for school and her husband, she added, sometimes even asks for her opinion.

Second, negotiation through involvement in the association. The experience of leading meetings and taking part in collective decision-making builds a confidence that carries over into the domestic sphere. The association's treasurer described becoming braver about speaking up at home since taking on the role, adding that her husband has grown more respectful too, likely because he sees how much she is trusted within the group.

Third, negotiation through flexible working hours. Because batik production can be carried out at home, women fulfil domestic and economic roles simultaneously not merely as a compromise, but as an adaptive strategy for navigating the dual expectations of a patriarchal society. (Abdullah, 2001) argues that women possess the capacity to resist and devise strategies in the face of constraining social structures, and the findings from Giriloyo empirically confirm this.

The Reciprocal Economic-Gender Effect: Two Original Concepts

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The most significant finding of this study is a pattern conceptualized as the "reciprocal economic-gender effect": as women gain greater economic autonomy through batik, this organically drives a renegotiation of gender relations within the family and community not through conflict or external policy intervention, but through an internal shift in how women's value and contribution are perceived. One informant recounted that her daughter, already at university, had told her she seemed more confident now probably, she reflected, because she has become braver about speaking up in meetings and now has an income of her own.

This reciprocal effect operates through three mutually reinforcing pathways: growing trust from husbands who witness their wives' managerial capability within the association; children's recognition of their mothers as breadwinners; and community recognition of women batik makers as custodians of culture who hold genuine social authority. Together, these pathways create conditions more conducive to gender equality that is substantive rather than merely formal.

This study proposes two interrelated original concepts to explain this pattern. First, cultural-economic gender negotiation the way women batik makers expand their autonomy without direct confrontation with patriarchal structures, drawing on the cultural value of batik-making as respected women's work and on their growing financial contribution as a new source of economic leverage. Second, the reciprocal economic-gender effect the mechanism by which the organic, gradual strengthening of women's economic-citizenship capacity transforms gender relations from within, rather than from without. Both concepts constitute this study's contribution to the field of gender and civic economy studies, particularly from the perspective of Pancasila and Civic Education, and function as an "informal school of citizenship" in which women learn to negotiate, lead, and take responsibility for their community through the everyday act of batik-making a process that challenges the assumption that citizenship learning occurs only within formal educational institutions.

Dialogue with Recent Literature and the SDG 5 Agenda

These findings leave open tensions that should not be oversimplified. First, the tension between structure and agency: women batik makers are not merely victims of patriarchal structure but active agents who negotiate their position, and disregarding this agency risks reproducing a demeaning view of them. Second, the tension between universalism and locality: international gender-equality standards do not always fit local contexts, and an overly normative approach risks overlooking women's adaptive strategies at the grassroots. Third, the tension between economic inclusion and substantive emancipation: bringing women into an existing economic system does not automatically produce equality, since genuine empowerment requires a transformation of power relations, not merely an increase in the female labour force (Kabeer, 2020).

These findings align with (Derfiora & Hidayah, 2025), who likewise found agentic transformation among Giriloyo's women batik makers through entrepreneurship; this study extends that work by specifically mapping which dimensions of resources women have come to fully control and which remain constrained. A similar pattern appears among the jumputan batik group in Piyungan, Bantul (Yulinar & Winarni, 2024) and the Marunda batik group in North Jakarta (Permata & Siregar, 2024): craft-based training tends to succeed in raising women's income but is rarely accompanied by an explicit evaluation of shifts in household power relations. (Fitri et al., 2024) further affirm that the effectiveness of empowerment programs in advancing SDG 5 depends heavily on whether such programs engage the dimension of decision-making, rather than skills and income training alone.

The bottom-up pattern of change found in Giriloyo is also supported by (Dwityas et al., 2025) study of Indonesian women leveraging social media for economic empowerment, where relational agency built through networks and social recognition proves to be a pathway to empowerment just as significant as formal policy intervention. (Wonde, 2024) cautions that achieving SDG 5 by 2030 will depend heavily on strategies that address the structural dimensions of empowerment, not economic participation alone a caution directly relevant to the access-control paradox identified in this study. Within the framework of sustainable development, these findings affirm that SDG 5 is not merely a goal in itself but a precondition for sustainable development as a whole, and that its achievement at the grassroots level does not always follow a linear or uniform path; it may instead take the form of a quiet, gradual, and highly contextual process of negotiation, as observed among the women batik makers of Giriloyo.

It is also worth situating these findings within the broader field of batik-based women's empowerment research in Indonesia, which has grown substantially in recent years. (Suprayitno et al., 2025) show that the performance and sustainability of batik SMEs depend heavily on government support and business-association structures factors that resonate

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with Giriloyo's own experience of institutional strengthening after 2006, though their study does not extend to the household-level gender dynamics this article foregrounds. Taken together, this body of literature suggests a field that has become increasingly attentive to women's economic contribution through batik, yet still comparatively thin on the question this study centres: whether, and how, that contribution reshapes power itself.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that gender relations among Giriloyo's women batik makers are marked by an access-control paradox: high access to productive resources does not translate into commensurate control over strategic family decisions. Even so, women batik makers are not passive; they negotiate gender relations gradually through economic contribution, involvement in the association, and flexible working hours. This strengthening of economic autonomy in turn triggers the reciprocal economic-gender effect a transformation of gender relations that moves from within the family and community, rather than from external policy intervention. The two concepts of cultural-economic gender negotiation and the reciprocal economic-gender effect represent this study's original contribution to the study of gender and the civic economy.

Theoretically, this study enriches the Gender and Development framework by showing that the distinction between practical and strategic gender needs, should be complemented by an understanding of organic, gradual pathways of change, particularly in communities where economic activity is tightly interwoven with cultural identity. Practically, these findings suggest that culture-based women's empowerment programs should be evaluated not merely by income growth, but also by the extent to which they open space for women's leadership and collective decision-making, since that space proves most effective in driving sustainable transformation in gender relations. Local governments are advised to design empowerment programmes that specifically target strategic gender needs, such as credit access that does not require another party's consent, to accelerate the transformation of women's control over resources.

This study is limited by its single-site scope and small number of informants, meaning its findings cannot necessarily be generalized to batik communities in other regions with different socio-cultural contexts. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct comparable studies in other communities to test the broader applicability of the reciprocal economic-gender effect, to incorporate the perspectives of other actors such as men, village government, and tourism stakeholders, and to develop quantitative or mixed-methods instruments capable of measuring the degree of gender-relations transformation more precisely.

More broadly, the case of Giriloyo suggests that culture-based creative economies deserve closer attention as sites of gender transformation in their own right, not merely as vehicles of poverty alleviation. As Indonesia continues to expand support for creative industries and village-based tourism, policymakers would do well to recognize that the batik association, the weaving cooperative, or the culinary group can function simultaneously as an economic institution and as an informal school of citizenship one capable of reshaping, gradually but genuinely, how women's voice, labour, and authority are valued within their own families and communities.

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