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Women's Empowerment through Culture-Based Life Skills Literacy Programs

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Abstract: Rural women's empowerment has not yet been fully optimized because women's abilities are not recognized as a key component of the family. This study aims to describe and analyze culture-based Life Skill Literacy (LSL) learning to empower rural women at the Community Learning Activity Center. The subjects of this study were rural women who participated in culture-based life skill literacy learning activities in Central Java. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively using Sara Longwe's gender analysis framework. This study found that culture-based life skills literacy learning was associated with perceived improvements in rural women's life skills, including personal, social, academic, and vocational skills. The findings indicate that the program facilitated the integration of local cultural values meaningful to participants. Participants reported perceived changes in women's participation and the fulfillment of basic needs. However, the analysis showed that inequalities in access and control still need to be addressed to achieve comprehensive gender equality.
Keywords: life skills literacy, women empowerment, culture-based learning, village women, community learning center

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INTRODUCTION

The source of the problem that causes poverty for women in Indonesia is the patriarchal culture (Eleanora & Supriyanto, 2020). This culture causes discrimination, marginalization, harassment, and exploitation due to the source of justification for the authority distribution system, decision-making system, gender bias risk system, division of labor system, and ownership system (Kerr, 2021). Poverty for women is often interpreted as a lack of access to choices that should be inherent in the social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental fields. A concept closely related to poverty is impoverishment. The impoverishment process actively eliminates access and basic rights, systematically reproduced and created by several global mechanisms (Josefsson & Wall, 2020). This process is known as economic, ecological, social, political, and cultural weakening, especially for women. Women's active involvement must continue to be encouraged to find the most appropriate position, not only for their main functions in the family but also for the environment and society (Maseda et al., 2022). Several ideas that continue to open space for the growth and development of women's roles have inspired many thinkers, ranging from academics and researchers to women activists, to advocate for and provide women's life skills programs in the village. The ongoing village development process must accommodate women's aspirations and needs so they can participate in the village's political and development processes (Syukri, 2023). This is important so women are not only the target of discussion and the object of development. However, most village development in Indonesia is still gender biased and pays little attention to the important aspects needed by

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women to live healthily, prosperously, and openly in their active roles. Women need to fight for themselves so that their roles in the family and village development can be achieved and implemented properly. Despite these efforts, improving women's participation requires educational interventions that strengthen their capabilities while remaining relevant to the socio-cultural context of rural communities.

In this study, local cultural values in the research setting may influence gender roles and women's participation in social and economic activities (Suryatni & Widana, 2023). These values tend to pamper and favor men and place women second under men's power. These values make it difficult for women to develop as individuals and find their identities. This can make women feel afraid and unable to develop their potential. However, as times change, these views have given rise to diverse perceptions among women. Traditional perceptions still consider women's roles limited to the domestic sphere, namely serving and caring for the household. If women are involved in the economy, it is only to support their husbands because their income is insufficient, so it is purely for financial reasons. In contrast, women with a more modern perception believe women and men have the same opportunity to develop their abilities in various areas of life. Rural women are still more likely to be poor and illiterate than men (Ingutia et al., 2020). Although many policies and international agreements affirm human rights, women still have less access than men to jobs, training, property ownership, and so on (Cole, 2022). This life skills literacy ability opens up wide opportunities for women to get to know the world around them, understand the various factors that influence their environment, actively participate in national development and democratic life, and strengthen their cultural identity. Life Skills Literacy is prioritized in line with poverty alleviation programs to be more focused, systematic, and sustainable by using life skills (Qureshi, 2020). By referring to clear, measurable literacy standards, results can improve women's productivity and fully empower them.

Life skills literacy is divided into four (4) areas (Audrin & Audrin, 2022): a) literacy knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts. b) Literacy knowledge and skills needed to find and use information in various formats. c) Numeracy, knowledge, and skills are needed to manage various situations' demands effectively. d) Problem-solving involves thinking and acting directed at goals and situations. Problem-solving involves understanding problem situations and transforming them step by step through planning and reasoning (Goulet-Lyle et al., 2020). Life skills literacy allows women to participate in public activities as professionals and social activists (Costa et al., 2021). Culture-based Life Skills Literacy learning can improve rural women's abilities through non-formal education and learning efforts. Life Skills Literacy can support goal achievement through thinking activities and collaborative learning for professional and daily life (Mayuga, 2022). This culture-based life skills literacy learning is organized through the Community Learning Activity Center (CLC) as a non-formal education forum. Previous studies on life skills literacy and women's empowerment have generally focused on program outcomes. Still, they have not sufficiently explained how local cultural values are systematically integrated into the learning process at the community level. Despite the growing body of research on women's empowerment and life skills literacy, several important gaps remain. First, previous studies have primarily examined the effectiveness of life skills literacy in improving literacy, vocational competencies, or economic outcomes. At the same time, limited attention has been given to how culture-based life skills literacy is implemented in Community Learning Activity Centers serving rural women. Second, although culture is frequently mentioned as an important contextual factor, few studies explain how local cultural values are systematically integrated into learning objectives, instructional activities, and vocational practices. Third, most studies evaluate program outcomes using general indicators of participation or economic improvement. In contrast, limited research applies a comprehensive gender empowerment framework to examine changes across different dimensions of empowerment.

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Literacy is closely related to human thinking. A person with a high level of literacy can read various aspects of their life well, including reading the signs of the times (Leander & Burriss, 2020). Limited access to literacy for women has hampered society's progress and development. Wu et al. (2022) describe three hierarchical levels of life skills literacy: literacy in reading, writing, and numeracy (basic literacy). Level two literacy relates to workplace skills and focuses on using basic literacy to solve problems in the workplace. Level three covers job-specific skills. Skills literacy matters because it extends beyond basic literacy to applying literacy to improve everyday life skills (Churchill, 2020).

Culture-based learning refers to an educational approach that integrates local knowledge, cultural values, community practices, and social interactions into the learning process rather than merely using local cultural products as learning materials. In this view, culture provides the context through which learners construct knowledge, solve real-life problems, and strengthen their cultural identity. Therefore, cultural elements are reflected not only in vocational activities such as batik production or traditional food processing but also in collaborative learning, community participation, local decision-making practices, and the transmission of local wisdom across generations.

Accordingly, the culture-based Life Skills Literacy program examined in this study integrates local culture through four components: (1) culturally relevant vocational activities, including batik and traditional food processing; (2) participatory learning involving community leaders; (3) learning activities that promote local values of cooperation and mutual support; and (4) learning materials that are contextualized to participants' everyday experiences in rural communities.

Several studies have found that adults with adequate literacy levels have greater opportunities to participate in work, are more active in democratic life and volunteer activities, and have better health and higher income levels. Other research also states that life skills Literacy is a solution to improve a person's abilities through education and learning efforts, where literacy learning can optimize potential so that goals can be achieved through thinking activities and being involved together in learning (Anthonysamy et al., 2020); life skills are skills that can adapt and behave positively. Life skills enable a person to face various demands and challenges in life more effectively. Life skills literacy can help someone develop learning abilities, recognize their potential, practice them, and dare to face everyday problems and solve them creatively (Newman, 2020). Thus, women are expected to develop abilities that can serve as capital to improve their lives through independent efforts, strengthen the economy, and support cultural conservation, gaining better economic, social, and cultural benefits. Life Skills Literacy emphasizes women's learning needs (Pritchett & Sandefur, 2020). It also emphasizes developing motivation, modern attitudes, vocational skills, and job-related life skills for rural women.

Empowerment of Village Women

Empowerment is an effort to enable small communities or subordinates who have been considered to have no or a limited role in improving their status and role in the social system (Völker & Doneys, 2021). There are three important reasons why women must be empowered in the context of poverty alleviation, namely (Völker & Doneys, 2021): (1) because women have the same interests in development and are also users of development results who have the same rights as men, (2) women also have interests that are specific to women themselves and children, which are less than optimal if initiated by men because they require special sensitivity related to daily life, existing socio-cultural, and (3) empowering and involving women in development, will indirectly also empower and transmit positive enthusiasm to the next generation, who in general in daily life are very close to the figure of a mother.

Women's empowerment is an effort to realize equality of roles, access, and control for women and men in all areas of development (Ahmed & Hyndman-Rizk, 2020). Women's

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empowerment programs carried out by the government and society so far aim to create and distribute development benefits for men and women in a balanced manner. Women's empowerment includes three things (Hadisuyatmana et al., 2021): (1) capacity building means building women's abilities; (2) cultural change, namely cultural change that favors women; (3) structural adjustment is a structural adjustment that favors women. Various steps can be taken to create equality between men and women, or gender equality, including developing family entrepreneurship to realize a balanced role between men and women in the family and to achieve family welfare jointly. Although efforts to build gender equality have been carried out for quite a long time, many things and aspects of life still do not reflect the equality between women and men—lack of attention, intensity, and continuity of the program.

Several studies show this. Women's empowerment is included in the Millennium Goals and the Sustainable Development Agenda (Rose Taylor, 2020). Women's empowerment prioritizes the economic dimension and standard measurements, namely fulfilling women's basic needs, especially income, education, and health. Efforts toward women's empowerment occur when governments, institutions, or civil society organizations commit to empowering women through productive projects, education, or access to health services (Lwamba et al., 2022). Research on women's empowerment is an effort to enable women to gain access to and control over economic, political, social, and cultural resources, so that women can organize themselves and increase their self-confidence to be able to play a role and participate actively in solving problems so that they can build abilities and self-concept. Women's empowerment is both a process and a goal (Karp et al., 2020).

Therefore, women's empowerment cannot be separated from community empowerment. Community empowerment aims to create an independent society that can explore and utilize its potential and help people escape backwardness or poverty. Empowerment cannot be separated from gender equality. Gender is a sociocultural variable with assumptions that shape how men and women behave (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). So, the portion of the burden (which refers to biological physical strength) cannot be used as an indicator of equality; even so, women still have the right to choose the activities they want, even if they are hard work. Gender equality should not be defined narrowly; not only must men be able to become women, but women must also be able to become men, because equality does not shape individuals into artificial figures (Flood et al., 2021).

This is relevant to the study entitled "Gender, Literacy, Empowerment in Morocco" (Finn & Laaboudi, 2021), which found that poverty among Moroccan women stems from their powerlessness in accessing existing resources. Low skills and work motivation cause women in Morocco to be the ones who experience quite high social inequality when compared to men. Based on research data, it is emphasized that before the study was conducted, Moroccan women had a low literacy rate. This causes women to lag in various aspects.

In general, women's empowerment has three main principles (Laszlo et al., 2020), namely: (1) the principle of equal rights between men and women; (2) the principle of non-discrimination, especially based on gender; and (3) the principle that the regional government is obliged to realize equal rights in the civil, economic, and socio-cultural fields. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is an essential goal that all parties have long fought for. From time to time, progress in realizing gender equality is marked by various changes experienced by women and other marginalized groups.

To address these gaps, this study investigates the implementation of culture-based Life Skills Literacy in a Community Learning Activity Center in Central Java. Unlike previous studies that mainly focus on learning outcomes, this study explains how local cultural values are embedded throughout the learning process, including learning materials, collaborative activities, and vocational practices based on local resources. Furthermore, Sara Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework is employed because it enables the analysis of

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empowerment across five interconnected dimensions: welfare, access, critical awareness, participation, and control, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of women's empowerment beyond improvements in literacy or economic skills.

This research supports empowering village women while maintaining cultural values as local wisdom. This empowerment effort is carried out through culture-based life skills literacy learning organized by community learning activity centers in rural areas. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of culturally responsive life skills literacy programs and provide practical insights for non-formal education institutions seeking to promote women's empowerment in rural communities.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative descriptive is used to describe and analyze culture-based life skills literacy learning (Sugiyono, 2017). At the same time, gender analysis is used to analyze the level of empowerment of rural women, which consists of 5 levels (Wei et al., 2021): welfare, access, critical awareness, participation, and access. In women's empowerment research, the Longwe gender analysis is the most appropriate tool for measuring empowerment. This study aims to describe and analyze Culture-Based Life Skills Literacy Learning (LSL) for Rural Women's Empowerment at the Community Learning Activity Center. The culture-based Life Skills Literacy program involved 42 rural women as program participants. However, this qualitative study did not involve all participants as research informants. Eight key informants were purposively selected because they actively participated in the program and could provide in-depth information about the learning process and empowerment experiences. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select the research participants. Informants were selected based on three criteria: (1) active participation in the culture-based Life Skills Literacy program, (2) completion of the learning activities, and (3) willingness and ability to share their experiences during in-depth interviews. Purposive sampling was appropriate because the study aimed to obtain rich, detailed information about participants' learning experiences and perceived empowerment. In addition, representatives from four Community Learning Activity Centers (CLC) were included to provide contextual information regarding program implementation. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with female participants in life skills literacy learning, resource persons, and learning managers. Participant observation was conducted during the life skills literacy learning activities. Documentation was obtained from all learning activity documents and CLC Institutions. Researchers used source triangulation by drawing on multiple data sources for the same information. Thus, the data obtained can be cross-checked using the same data, even though it comes from different sources. Source triangulation means comparing and checking the trustworthiness of information obtained through different times and tools. The data analysis method is an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The three components of data analysis interact in a cyclical, interrelated process before, during, and after data collection. In addition, data on village women's empowerment were analyzed using the Longwe method, namely from 5 dimensions, including welfare, access, awareness, participation, and control, with the Gender analysis approach from Sara Longwe (Wei et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Profile of Village Women

The village women in this study lived in villages in Central Java. The village is rural and offers an atmosphere that reflects its authenticity in social life, economy, culture, customs, daily life, and unique spatial structure. The village has unique and interesting economic activities and

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strong development potential. The following is the profile of village women who participated in culture-based life skill literacy learning.

Table 1. Profile of Village Women

Profile of Village Women Who Participate in Life Skill Literacy Learning	
Age	22 years to 49 years
Education	Elementary school to high school graduate
Occupation	Housewife, vegetable trader, fruit trader, farmer, farm laborer, and snack business.
Average monthly income	32 USD- 128.24 USD
Average monthly expenses	96,18 USD – 192,35 USD
Family and Social Activities	
Activities at home	Washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning the house, dropping off and picking up children from school.
Social community activities	Family Welfare Development, RT Arisan, Dasa Wisma, religious studies, integrated development posts, integrated service posts, tourism awareness groups, cooperation work
Position in the social community	Member of Family Welfare Development, Integrated Service Posts, and Integrated Development Posts
Activities in village development	Helping with several activities at various events in the village
Position in village development	Treasurer, consumption section, and member of village event activities
Technology, communication, and information	All women already have smartphones and can operate them. Forty percent have Facebook, 5 percent have Instagram, and none have Twitter or Telegram.

Table 1 shows the profile of village women who participated in this learning, aged around 22 to 49 years. Their low education does not reduce their desire to participate in development activities in their village. The average basic income is tied to their livelihood and can be used only for daily living needs. In addition, village women cannot perform their roles optimally because the dual roles imposed on them limit their time to work. The family environment significantly influences women's participation in public-sphere activities. Family members, including husbands and children, encourage women to participate in social activities by joining village organizational activities. However, according to village women's narratives, they must manage their time well so they do not neglect family interests. In addition to support from the family environment, support from the outside environment also supports women's role in village development activities. Women's participation in activities is very high and exceeds the set target. Awareness of the role as a representative of the community is quite high; this is reflected in the level of attendance and involvement in preparing plans and implementing learning activities. In addition, all informants stated that women faced no obstacles to participating in village institutions.

Culture-Based LifeSkill Literacy Learning

The results of this study were analyzed using the manual data analysis procedure (MDAP). Culture-Based LifeSkill Literacy Learning uses a participatory learning method. Before the life skills literacy learning process begins, the organizers prepare a design and plan with the PKBM organizers, community leaders, and resource persons. This culture-based life skills literacy includes basic literacy, personal skills, social skills, academic skills, and vocational skills. The following are the stages of implementing life skills literacy learning.

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Activity Preparation. Participant Identification: Identifying village women in Central Java who are the targets of the program based on their needs for empowerment and life skills. Community Approach: Involve community and village leaders to support and promote this activity and ensure that this program is relevant to local culture and values. Preparation of Materials and Facilitators: Develop materials per the Central Javanese cultural context, including batik training and traditional food processing. Facilitators who understand local culture and related skills will be selected to guide the activity.

Activity Implementation. Program Socialization: Hold an initial meeting to explain the program's objectives and benefits to participants and the community and build a shared commitment to running the program. Learning Activities divided into Personal skills: Reflection and life planning sessions teach participants to recognize their potential and manage emotions and time effectively. Social skills: communication and cooperation exercises through role-playing and collaborative projects that teach participants to interact with empathy and work together in teams. Academic skills: developing analytical and critical skills, including small research on local and cultural issues. Vocational skills: batik training and processing of Central Javanese specialties provide participants with practical skills that can improve family finances.

Monitoring and Evaluation. Observation and Feedback: During the implementation of the culture-based Life Skills Literacy program, facilitators continuously observed participants' engagement, attendance, and performance throughout the learning activities. Facilitators provided feedback during practice sessions, particularly in batik production and traditional food processing, enabling participants to improve their skills through repeated practice and guidance. Interview data also indicated that participants perceived the feedback sessions as helpful for identifying mistakes and improving their practical performance. Objective Achievement Assessment: Participants' learning outcomes were evaluated through observations of practical performance, group discussions, and presentations of learning products. The evaluation showed that most participants demonstrated the basic competencies targeted by the program, including communication during group activities, problem-solving, and applying vocational skills to produce batik and traditional food products. These findings were supported by interview data in which participants described applying the acquired skills in their daily activities. Reporting and Follow-up: Following program implementation, the learning outcomes were documented by the Community Learning Activity Centers (CLC) and communicated to local stakeholders. The participating CLCs also continued mentoring activities through periodic meetings and practical assistance to encourage participants to apply the acquired skills in their communities. However, the intensity of follow-up activities varied across the participating CLCs depending on the availability of local resources and institutional support.

After receiving the material on personal skills, the interview results showed positive impacts on village women. One of the main changes expressed was increased self-confidence. Many who previously felt hesitant or uncomfortable communicating are now more open and able to express themselves confidently. "Before joining the program, I was reluctant to speak during village meetings because I was afraid of making mistakes. After participating in the learning activities, I became more confident to express my opinions" (Participant 3). They also began to appreciate their potential and strengths more while accepting their shortcomings without excessive feelings of inferiority. Applying rational thinking skills, village women reported that they were better able to make decisions with mature consideration, especially in everyday situations involving family, work, and social relationships. They also developed creative problem-solving skills, often finding innovative solutions that had not yet been considered. This contributed to Several participants reporting that they applied these skills in their daily activities, both at home and in the economic activities they carry out, such as small businesses or work in agriculture. In addition, personal skills materials helped them address negative stereotypes that often hindered their development. With better knowledge, they Some

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participants perceived that they were more willing to express their opinions in rejecting demeaning social views or expectations. They began to build a more positive self-identity based on a deeper understanding of their value and potential as individuals and members of society. This helped them overcome social challenges, and some participants reported becoming more involved in community activities.

After receiving social skills training, the interview results showed an impact on village women's ability to socialize and interact with the community. Materials that focus on communication skills with empathy (communication skills) and collaboration skills (collaboration skills) have helped them improve their presence and existence in the community. In terms of communication, village women reported an increased ability to listen to and understand others' feelings and perspectives, which allows them to communicate more empathetically. Now I am more comfortable discussing village activities with other women. Previously, I usually remained silent" (Participant 5). In addition, they feel more comfortable expressing their opinions in ways that respect others' views. Participants felt their opinions were considered more often during group discussions. or community meetings.

Regarding collaboration, village women became more active in joint activities such as cooperation and work groups. They felt more confident working with men, especially in activities men had previously dominated. This reflects a shift in perceptions of gender roles and a growing recognition of equal rights. Village women also reported that the social skills they learned improved their social lives, making several participants feel more comfortable participating in community discussions and more valued by the surrounding community. They also felt more comfortable participating in community discussions and more aware of the social participation and decision-making that affect the community.

The interview results showed that the academic skills training given to village women had improved their scientific thinking skills. Village women are now better able to identify the problems they face in their daily lives using a more analytical and systematic approach. They can recognize local issues and analyze their root causes in greater depth, understand the factors that influence the situation, and see the relationships between various events and social conditions around them. Village women have shown progress in formulating a series of events related to their culture and social context. This learning helps them understand how historical and cultural events interact and influence life today. They can better trace the roots of local traditions and customs to understand how social and cultural changes impact their society.

Design and learning: Rural women are now more skilled at designing activities or programs that align with local cultural values. They can create projects that support cultural preservation and align with their communities' needs and priorities. This learning includes skills in developing and implementing programs and evaluating the results to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. Using a scientific approach, they can assess the impact of the activities and make necessary adjustments to improve results.

The impact of learning these academic skills is also evident in the daily lives of rural women. Thanks to the scientific thinking skills they have developed, they feel more confident in analyzing everyday problems and solving them. This ability not only strengthens their position as more skilled and knowledgeable individuals but also makes participants feel better prepared to participate in community activities. Rural women can now play a more active role in decision-making and activities that affect community development, using academic knowledge to improve their environment's welfare and quality of life.

The interview results showed that the vocational skills training provided to rural women has had a broad and deep impact. Tailored to local natural resources and needs, this program has improved rural women's practical skills across various fields. These skills not only enrich their abilities but also open up new opportunities for self-employment. As a result, village women can now create opportunities to generate additional household income through small

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businesses based on their new skills. This vocational training helps them with practical skills such as basic financial management and product marketing, and it strengthens their confidence in managing and growing their businesses. With greater confidence in using their acquired vocational skills, they can reduce their dependence on external resources and contribute more to their families' welfare. Women who have received training often play an active role in sharing their skills with other community members, extending the benefits of the training to more people. This not only strengthens social networks among village women but also helps build the capacity of the community as a whole. With better skills, they can participate more actively in economic and social activities, improving the quality of life in their communities. This vocational learning also motivates village women to keep learning and further develop their skills. They feel more motivated to explore new opportunities and face economic challenges with confidence. Support from their surroundings, both from family and community, encourages them to utilize the skills they have learned and succeed in their endeavors.

Empowerment of Village Women with the Longwe Method Gender Analysis Framework

The Longwe Method gender analysis framework was used to analyze the empowerment of village women. The analysis results show that village women's empowerment through culture-based life skills literacy learning is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Women's Empowerment Framework

Level	Dimensions of Women's Empowerment
Well-being	Fulfillment of basic needs: food, health, education, decent housing
Access	Women have the potential and skills to make decisions in their families and environments.
Critical Awareness	Gender gaps occur because of socio-cultural factors; therefore, it is necessary to build critical awareness among village women.
Participation	Efforts to empower village women are directed at teaching them life skills and literacy based on culture as a form of participation in self-development and village development.
Control	Women's empowerment aims to balance power allocation between women and men by allowing women to control self-development and village development.

The findings presented in Table 2 are analyzed through Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework, which provides a critical perspective for examining gender inequalities, discriminatory practices, and structural patterns of subordination that shape women's positions within social and economic contexts. This framework conceptualizes women's empowerment as a multidimensional and progressive process involving five interconnected levels of equality: welfare, access, conscientization or critical awareness, participation, and control. At the welfare level, empowerment is primarily concerned with women's material well-being and the fulfillment of basic needs, whereas access emphasizes equitable opportunities to obtain and utilize resources, education, information, and economic opportunities. Critical awareness represents a deeper transformation in which women recognize that gender inequalities are socially constructed rather than naturally determined, enabling them to question discriminatory norms and unequal power relations. Participation extends this awareness into meaningful involvement in decision-making processes, ensuring that women are not merely beneficiaries of development initiatives but active contributors to shaping their priorities and implementation.

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Table 3. Level of Equality and Empowerment

	Equality		Empowerment	
	Women	Man	Women	Man
Control				
Participation				
Critical Awareness				
Access				
Well-Being				



The study's results (Table 3) show the direction of improvement toward women's empowerment and gender equality after being given culture-based life skills literacy learning. In the control dimension, women's empowerment is at the highest level, with women playing an active role in their village's development. In the participation dimension, women have reached a level where they make decisions, besides men organizing themselves to work in groups. The Critical Awareness dimension relates to awareness of their role in strengthening or changing conditions for the better than in their previous lives. The access dimension concerns equal access to resources and the benefits of awareness for women, and how lack of access is a barrier to women's empowerment efforts. The welfare dimension addresses basic needs by identifying the root cause and meeting them.

Discussion

The study results indicate that culture-based life skill literacy learning supports rural women's empowerment. Life skill literacy, especially literacy, enables women to participate in public activities as professionals and social activists (Suoranta et al., 2023). This is evident from changes in basic literacy and personal, social, academic, and vocational skills (Suoranta et al., 2023). 1) Improving personal skills and learning activities have increased the participants' self-confidence and self-management skills. Rural women better understood the importance of planning their lives systematically, managing time, and managing emotions (Chatterjee et al., 2022). Self-reflection during the activities made them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and better prepared to face everyday challenges. 2) Developing social skills: This program helps participants develop effective communication and teamwork skills. They become more open in interacting with others, can communicate better, and demonstrate the ability to collaborate to achieve common goals. This increases their recognition and presence in the community and gives them a more equal position in social life (Young, 2020). 3) Improvement of academic skills: Through this training, participants can conduct simple analyses of the social problems they face in their environment. They can also systematically identify and formulate problems and develop more effective solutions. This critical-thinking ability opens new insights for participants into the world around them (Tang et al., 2020). 4) Vocational Skills: Participants improved practical skills, especially in batik and traditional food processing. This training provided them with technical skills and knowledge to use local resources efficiently. Some participants have started small businesses based on the skills they learned, which could increase family income. 5) By strengthening cultural identity and integrating cultural values in every aspect of learning, participants will become more appreciative and understand their cultural

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heritage. They can also connect the skills they learn with the local cultural context, which helps preserve and strengthen local cultural identity. The products produced from this activity, such as batik and traditional food, reflect local culture and symbolize pride for the participants and their communities. 6) Economic empowerment and independence: The results of this activity show that village women are increasingly empowered to take an active role in the economic and social fields. Not only do they have skills that can be used to increase income, but they also have the confidence and knowledge to manage their businesses. Gender equality in the community has also improved, with rural women gaining better access to resources and opportunities to contribute to village development (Winter et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings suggest that culture-based Life Skills Literacy contributed to participants' perceived empowerment by strengthening their capabilities and encouraging greater participation in community activities. This is an important step towards improving their quality of life and socio-economic well-being. The empowerment of rural women through life skills literacy learning is studied using five empowerment criteria based on the Longwe analysis (Wei et al., 2021), which found that 1) rural women meet the same basic needs as men in the welfare dimension. 2) Access dimension: there is a difference in access to resources, with women having lower access than men. 3) Critical awareness dimension: there is still a gender gap due to the lower socio-economic position of rural women than men. 4) The findings indicate greater participation in community activities. However, this does not necessarily indicate equality in access, socioeconomic position, or decision-making because disparities remain in these dimensions. According to Longwe's framework, participation may improve before changes in access and control are achieved. 5) Control Dimension: There is still an imbalance in the power relations between men and women in the village. This result is in line with the research. Including the dimensions of justice and gender equality highlights structural barriers that prevent the rights of low-income people from being realized. One structural barrier of concern here is unequal and unfair gender relations (Wei et al., 2021). Patriarchal culture results in women being in a weak bargaining position. Meanwhile, women's voices fighting for their interests must be channeled through formal decision-making mechanisms.

The persistence of inequalities in access and control suggests that educational interventions alone cannot transform gender relations. The involvement of rural women in empowering themselves is essential to achieving equitable development. The country cannot prosper if its women are left behind, marginalized, and oppressed. Vivekananda's research (Clark et al., 2020) states that countries and nations that do not respect their women will never be great, either now or in the future. Women, both as citizens and as developers, have the same rights, obligations, and opportunities as men in all development activities in all areas of life. The role of women has also been accommodated by all national development regulations, such as Women in many patriarchal cultural structures always having a dominant position in receiving unfair treatment. Development aims to improve the lives of people, both men and women, as subjects of development to achieve gender-perspective justice. The ongoing gender inequality has implications for reproductive health issues and reproductive rights. Applying a gender perspective to poverty does not belittle the poverty experienced by men; it emphasizes that women's poverty is specific and requires special attention (Farnworth et al., 2020).

This gap is caused by women's low education, which hinders digital literacy because accessing the Internet requires at least literacy and language knowledge (Pangrazio et al., 2020). The findings imply that culture-based Life Skills Literacy should be viewed as an initial step toward women's empowerment. Although participants perceived improvements in their capabilities, broader gender equality requires structural support through local institutions, access to resources, and gender-responsive policies. Empowerment-related development is village development, which aims to improve the abilities of the community and village institutions simultaneously. Women's participation in the pace of development has increased.

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Data from the Tourism Awareness Group Coordination Team Development Division shows that almost 30% of program proposals come from women's initiatives. Women's strong participation has contributed significantly to this success. However, women's capacity to fight for their development needs still needs improvement. In addition, our still-paternalistic society remains a challenge that must be addressed.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that culture-based life skills literacy learning is expected to overcome various problems rural women face. This program implements lifelong education and women's empowerment with a gender perspective, which is integrated with local cultural values. This learning focuses on improving four life skills: personal, social, academic, and vocational, which are based on natural resources and the needs of participants. Rural women are expected to become more empowered and develop a positive attitude that improves their quality of life. This life skills learning is the first step toward achieving equality in roles, access, and control between women and men across various fields. This program was initiated by the Community Learning Activity Center (CLC) to distribute development benefits in a balanced manner between men and women. Based on Longwe's analysis, it was found that in the welfare dimension, rural women have met basic needs that are equal to men. However, inequalities remain in access, critical awareness, and control. Women's participation in development has increased, but gender gaps in power and control still exist. To achieve gender equality, it is important to build empowerment so that men's and women's roles in the family can be balanced and contribute to better welfare.

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