

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN ADAPTATION AND INNOVATION: A STUDY OF COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT IN TULUNG REJO VILLAGE

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Abstract. This study examines women's empowerment in the adoption of agricultural innovations through a community-based development approach in Tulung Rejo Village. The objective of the study is to analyze women's roles in the implementation of agricultural innovations and their contributions to village community development. The study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method, involving interviews, observations, and documentation. The results show that women play a significant role in agricultural product processing, digital marketing, and the implementation of community-based agricultural innovations. The community-based development approach encourages greater women's participation in decision-making and strengthens the local economy. However, challenges remain, including limited access to technology and a patriarchal culture. This study concludes that community-based women's empowerment can enhance the adoption of agricultural innovations and strengthen the economic resilience of the village community.

Keywords: women's empowerment, agricultural innovation, community-based development, Tulung Rejo Village

Abstrak. Penelitian ini membahas pemberdayaan perempuan dalam adaptasi inovasi pertanian melalui pendekatan *community-based development* di Desa Tulung Rejo. Penelitian bertujuan menganalisis peran perempuan dalam penerapan inovasi pertanian serta kontribusinya terhadap penguatan ekonomi masyarakat desa. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan berperan dalam pengolahan hasil pertanian, pemasaran digital, dan penerapan inovasi pertanian berbasis komunitas. Keterlibatan tersebut menunjukkan adanya perluasan peran perempuan dalam aktivitas ekonomi berbasis potensi lokal, terutama melalui pemanfaatan teknologi digital dan pengembangan produk pertanian. Pendekatan *community-based development* mendukung keterlibatan perempuan dalam kegiatan ekonomi dan pengembangan inovasi di tingkat komunitas. Namun, proses pemberdayaan masih menghadapi tantangan berupa keterbatasan akses terhadap teknologi dan pengaruh budaya patriarki. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemberdayaan perempuan berbasis komunitas berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kapasitas perempuan dalam mengadaptasi inovasi pertanian serta mendukung penguatan ekonomi lokal masyarakat desa.

Kata kunci: pemberdayaan perempuan, inovasi pertanian, *community-based development*, Desa Tulung Rejo

Introduction

Women's empowerment in rural areas is a strategic issue in sustainable development, particularly regarding the strengthening of local economies and the reduction of social inequality. Rural women play roles that extend beyond domestic duties to include agriculture, produce processing, marketing, and community-based economic activities. However, such involvement does not automatically equate to empowerment. Women's empowerment must be understood as a process that enables women to gain access to resources, develop their capacities and agency, and derive greater benefits from their participation in economic activities and community development. In a rural context, these indicators are reflected in women's ability to access and utilize productive resources including knowledge and technology as well as their engagement in economic activities and their capacity to develop and profit from their own enterprises. Therefore, studies on women's empowerment must look beyond the mere extent of participation to examine how such involvement expands the capacities, access, and benefits women gain within the community-based development process (Solikhatus Yuliana Kusumadewi et al., 2023).

As the concepts of tourism villages and creative economies rooted in local potential evolve, opportunities for women's participation are expanding. Villages are no longer viewed solely as sites of conventional agricultural production but also as spaces for experiential tourism that integrate farming activities, tourism, and visitor services. In this context, women have a strategic opportunity to engage not merely as support staff but as key players in maintaining product quality, shaping the tourism experience, and managing visitor interactions (Arroyo et al., 2019).

Tulung Rejo Village demonstrates interesting dynamics in women's empowerment practices rooted in agriculture and tourism. Agricultural activities serve not only consumption needs but are also developed into tourism attractions that collaboratively involve the village community, including landless residents. Women play active roles ranging from harvesting and selling produce to providing tourism services thereby directly contributing to increased family income and the village economy.

Furthermore, the use of digital media, such as social media and websites, serves as a key indicator of technological adaptation within these empowerment practices. Digital media enables village women to promote products and tourism activities more widely, reach markets beyond the village, and independently build the village's image as a tourism destination. This demonstrates that women's empowerment extends beyond the economic realm to encompass digital literacy and communication.

However, women's empowerment in Tulung Rejo Village also unfolds within a complex social reality. Women continue to fulfill domestic roles alongside their involvement in economic and tourism activities, thereby facing the burden of a dual role. This situation requires women to negotiate roles between the domestic and public spheres a process that often goes unrecognized in village empowerment policies and programs.

Various studies have highlighted the role of women in the agricultural sector and rural economic development. Research on the innovation adoption process among female farmers indicates that individual characteristics and group support significantly influence the implementation of agricultural innovations (Nina et al., 2025). Other research highlights the role of digital literacy as a factor that can enhance the ability of rural women to access information and expand marketing networks (Septianing Dewi Putri et al., 2024). Furthermore, research on

women's empowerment in the development of community-based tourism villages indicates that women's active participation contributes to local economic growth and the sustainability of tourism village management. (Hasanah et al., 2025).

Previous research has addressed the adoption of agricultural innovations, digital literacy among rural women, and women's economic contributions to community-based village development. However, these studies generally focused on adoption rates and economic participation without deeply examining the process of innovation diffusion through social interaction at the community level. Research positioning rural women as communication agents in the adaptation of agricultural and digital innovations remains limited.

Unlike previous studies that tended to emphasize general technology adoption rates, this research focuses on the processes of women's engagement and adaptation regarding the implementation of innovations at the community level. Here, community-based development serves as the contextual framework for empowerment defined as a process of building community capacity by positioning the community itself as the key actor in leveraging local potential. Meanwhile, participatory communication is understood as a process that fosters women's engagement through the exchange of information, experiences, and knowledge within the community. Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory serves as the primary analytical lens to understand how innovations are recognized, accepted, adapted, and utilized by women and the community in agricultural activities and local-potential-based economic development. Using this framework, the study analyzes the processes of innovation diffusion and adaptation through community interaction, as well as the evolution of women's engagement in these processes in Tulung Rejo Village.

Given this context, it is crucial to conduct an in-depth examination of the women's empowerment process in Tulung Rejo Village, the construction of women's roles in agricultural and tourism activities, and the use of digital media as an innovative empowerment tool within the community. This study aims to contribute academically to the field of rural women's empowerment while serving as a practical reference for developing more inclusive and sustainable village policies.

This study employs the Diffusion of Innovations theory developed by Everett M. Rogers to examine the process of agricultural innovation adoption in Tulung Rejo Village. According to Rogers, diffusion is the process by which an innovation is spread through specific communication channels over a period of time within a social system (Rogers, 1983). The innovation in this study is not limited to agricultural practices but also encompasses the development of the sector into village tourism activities and the use of digital media for promotion.

Innovation refers not only to technology but also encompasses new ideas, practices, or objects perceived as novel and relevant by individuals or communities (Rogers, 1983). This theory is used to classify women into the five adopter categories proposed by Rogers, in order to analyze their levels of acceptance and speed of adaptation regarding innovations emerging in Tulung Rejo Village. This mapping is conducted by examining the individual characteristics and social networks that influence adopter patterns, starting with innovators women most willing to take risks and act as pioneers in trying out new ideas or technologies, such as digital marketing or alternative farming practices.

Next, *early adopters* serve as opinion leaders whose social credibility validates an innovation, making it suitable for integration by the wider community. The *early majority* adopt a more cautious stance, implementing innovations only after observing concrete evidence of tangible benefits experienced by their predecessors; meanwhile, the *late majority* tend to be pragmatic, participating only after the innovation has been proven effective and free of significant obstacles. Finally, *laggards* are the group slowest to respond to change, often due to strong ties to tradition, limited access to information, or concerns about potential negative impacts (Dearing & Cox, 2018). By mapping this position, the study can identify how community network capacity and women's experiences contribute to the rate of adoption, thereby revealing that empowerment in Tulung Rejo Village is a process of role negotiation influenced by positions within the local social culture.

This study employs the theoretical framework of Diffusion of Innovations. (Rogers, 1983) The study analyzes the success of innovation adoption by women in Tulung Rejo Village using four key dimensions. First, innovation is understood as a new idea or practice relevant to the community's needs. Second, communication channels encompass information dissemination mechanisms, involving both interpersonal interactions and digital media. Third, time represents the individual's step-by-step progression through the decision-making process. Finally, the social system serves as the environmental structure that determines the acceptance of new ideas.

This research analyzes the innovation diffusion process through the role of interpersonal communication channels including interactions among neighbors and women's farming groups, as well as the influence of village figures who help legitimize the innovation. Several factors influence the success of this adoption, such as local cultural values, farming experience, and the level of trust in information sources; these are crucial elements in the process of innovation acceptance within the rural community.

The study also incorporates a participatory communication approach, emphasizing the importance of two-way communication and active community involvement in village development efforts. (Servaes, 2008). With this approach, rural communities are positioned not merely as recipients of innovation, but as actors actively involved in disseminating, adapting, and developing those innovations to suit the local context (Rakhmadani, 2021). Thus, the adaptation of innovation in Tulung Rejo Village is understood not merely as the adoption of agricultural technology, but as a social process involving the negotiation of roles including the roles of women in maintaining product quality, creating tourism experiences, and managing digital promotions. This approach provides a more contextual understanding of the dynamics of women's empowerment within community-based development practices at the village level.

Method

This study employs a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism posits that humans do not acquire or discover knowledge but rather construct and shape it. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The research approach employed in this study is the qualitative method. Qualitative research examines meanings derived from social and human issues. (Creswell, 2003). A qualitative approach offers the opportunity to view key aspects of the cases more clearly. (Neuman, 2003). This study employs a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the processes of women's empowerment and the adoption of agricultural innovations in Tulung Rejo Village. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on understanding the experiences, social practices, and

interactions within the village community, particularly regarding women's involvement in agricultural and tourism activities.

This research is descriptive in nature, as the research report aims to provide a specific overview of the situation, social setting, and relationships. (Neuman, 2003). Descriptive research presents a picture of the individuals being studied or of social activities, focusing on "how" and "who" questions. In contrast, this study employs a case study strategy. A case study is an empirical method for investigating a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within a real-world context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context may not be clearly defined. (Yin, 2018).

Data collection techniques are the processes of gathering and acquiring data, aimed at ensuring that the data is of high quality and properly stored upon the completion of the research. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Data collection involved the use of both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data refers to the core data specific to the research; in this study, it was obtained through in-depth interviews. Secondary data consists of existing information gathered to support data relevant to the study; for this research, it was derived from a literature review comprising books, journals, and scientific articles. Informants were selected using the purposive sampling technique. According to Csiernik, Birnbaum, and Pierce (2010), purposive sampling involves selecting a sample from the population based on the researcher's judgment. In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals involved in agricultural activities and village tourism management such as farmers and tourism operators who served as key informants. These interviews aimed to explore the informants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding the empowerment practices and innovation adaptations they implemented. The data obtained were subsequently analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process involved identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings within the field findings and linking them to Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory as the primary analytical framework. Through this approach, the study seeks to understand how innovations are adopted, disseminated, and developed within the social context of the village community, particularly through the role of women within that community.

The informants in this study are as follows:

Informant	Category	Gender
Informant 1 ST	Farmer	Female
Informan 2 AD	Farmer	Male
Informan 3 Qoryna Noer Seyma El Farabi, S.I.Kom., M.Si	Expert/Lecturer	Female
Informant 4 Dimas Prabu M. T	Practioner	Male

Results and Discussion

Village-Based Social Collaboration for Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment in Tulung Rejo Village unfolds through collaboration among community members, leveraging the village's agricultural and tourism potential. A male informant noted that economic activities involve not only landowners but also create opportunities for landless residents to engage in productive work. This perspective provides a context for understanding community-based empowerment patterns. However, given this study's focus on women's empowerment, the findings were further explored through the experiences and perspectives of

female informants specifically regarding the nature of their involvement, access to economic activities, and their contributions to the processing and marketing of agricultural produce. In an interview, informant AD (a farmer) stated:

"We invite neighbors who don't own orchards to work for instance, by pruning branches. So, it's a form of empowerment. For now, the produce is sold to tourists; if sold to buyers from outside the area, shipping costs apply."

This statement demonstrates that empowerment in Tulung Rejo Village extends beyond landowners to include residents who lack access to means of production. The practice of engaging neighbors in agricultural tasks such as pruning presents a form of empowerment rooted in collective labor and the distribution of economic opportunities. In this context, empowerment is not viewed as charitable aid, but rather as a process of actively involving villagers in the production and distribution chain. (Endah, 2020).

The success of this practice is driven by the integration of four key elements of the Diffusion of Innovations theory. Tourism-oriented agricultural innovation, coupled with an online delivery system, emerged as a novel concept relevant to the residents' economy. Interpersonal communication channels specifically the direct outreach conducted by Informant 2 accelerated the spread of this practice. Regarding the time dimension, resident engagement grew incrementally as positive attitudes toward the potential for new income developed. Finally, the village's social system, which fosters collective action, facilitated the community's acceptance of the practice.

Furthermore, directing harvests toward tourists including those from outside the region via delivery schemes demonstrates an integration between village agriculture and the tourism economy. This strengthens the village's position as a market-adaptive production hub while simultaneously creating new income opportunities for the community, including women. Within the framework of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, the actions of Informant 2 exhibit characteristics akin to those of an "early adopter," particularly given their role in introducing the initiative and encouraging other residents to participate in tourism-based agricultural activities. However, this categorization is not intended to definitively label Informant 2 as an early adopter, as Rogers' theory requires data on the relative timing of adoption compared to other members of the social system to make such a classification. Based on available data, it is more accurate to view Informant 2 as an actor contributing to the innovation's diffusion through interpersonal communication such as direct invitations to neighbors and daily community interactions. The adoption process unfolded within a social context characterized by values of mutual cooperation, farming experience, and interpersonal trust. These conditions served as social factors that facilitated information exchange and the collective acceptance of the new practice.

The Role of Women in Maintaining Tourism Quality and Experience

Observations and interviews revealed that ST (Informant 1) holds the following perspective regarding tourism quality:

"I want to cultivate crops honestly so that visitors can taste the sweetness. It's about the experience. I don't just plant haphazardly; otherwise, visitors would be disappointed."

The interview with Informant 1 illustrates one form of women's involvement in maintaining the quality of agricultural produce while simultaneously supporting the tourism experience in Tulung Rejo Village. Her focus on crop quality and her desire for visitors to experience the products firsthand indicate that agricultural activities are beginning to be viewed not merely as production tasks, but as integral parts of the tourism experience. These findings align with Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2020), who demonstrated that women's involvement in tourism can encompass roles related to service quality and the tourism experience. From the perspective of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, this practice can be understood as an adaptation to an innovation that links agricultural activities with tourism. However, the findings regarding Informant 1 represent an individual experience and cannot yet be generalized to describe the roles of all women in Tulung Rejo Village. To strengthen this interpretation, the interview findings need to be compared with the experiences of other female informants and with observations regarding women's involvement in product management and tourism activities.

This statement underscores the strategic position women hold in upholding the reputation of the tourism village. (A. Abou-Shouk et al., 2021). The rejection of "haphazard planting" practices reflects a long-term orientation toward visitor satisfaction and business sustainability. Consequently, women's empowerment in this village extends beyond the economic realm to encompass dimensions of decision-making and quality control. Acceptance of these practices is also shaped by existing farming experience and cultural values that frame guest satisfaction as part of the village community's social responsibility.

"I'd be washing dishes, then run over here whenever a guest arrived to meet her."

An interview with Informant 1 illustrates one form of women's involvement in maintaining agricultural quality while simultaneously supporting tourism activities in Tulung Rejo Village. Her attention to crop quality and her desire for visitors to experience the produce firsthand demonstrate that agricultural activities are not merely about production but are also linked to the tourism experience. The statement "I'd be washing dishes, then run over here whenever a guest arrived" reveals the reality of the "double burden" faced by rural women (Lyon et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Informant 3, an expert, noted:

"A shift in the domestic sphere that inevitably arises is the double burden; this is unavoidable because women's productive roles increase without a proportional reduction in their reproductive roles for instance, when a woman works a shift in the public sphere and then returns home to still manage the household."

This situation indicates the existence of gender-based power relations that place women in a position where they must simultaneously meet domestic and productive demands (Jenkins et al., 2019). It also demonstrates that the process of adopting innovation does not occur in a vacuum separate from daily life but rather through continuous social interaction within the immediate environment.

This situation reveals that women's empowerment in Tulung Rejo Village unfolds within a context of strong local culture, yet women are able to find space for agency within it. In other words, empowerment does not always manifest as a radical transformation of social structures, but rather as a dynamic negotiation of roles. (Pécot, Mathias Ricaurte-Quijano, Carla Khoo, Catheryn Vázquez, Marisol Alonso Barahona-Canales & Yang, Elaine Chiao Ling Tan, 2024). In the context of the diffusion of innovations, this situation demonstrates that an innovation is adopted, adapted,

and implemented through interpersonal communication and the trust established within the village community.

Digital Literacy and New Media Adaptation

Informant 1's use of TikTok and a website demonstrates the utilization of digital media to promote and disseminate information regarding the tourism potential of Tulung Rejo Village. Digital media is employed to introduce tourism products and activities to a broader audience, thereby expanding communication channels beyond the face-to-face interactions that previously characterized the community. (Prasetyo et al., 2023). This demonstrates that rural women are not passive regarding technology; rather, they are capable of acting as agents of digital communication. (Klerkx et al., 2019). Within the framework of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, the use of digital media signifies acceptance of an innovation that offers tangible benefits for village promotional activities. Consequently, these findings are best understood as a form of adaptation to digital media usage within economic and tourism activities. From the perspective of Rogers' theory, this utilization of digital media constitutes innovation adoption, occurring when the technology is perceived as beneficial for promotion and the development of tourism activities.

"I use TikTok, and I also had a website created for me with some help."

The phrase "had... created for me with some help" indicates that the digital media adoption process did not occur in isolation but rather through interpersonal communication and support from the local environment. This underscores that trust in information sources and social proximity are crucial factors in the acceptance of digital innovations at the village level.

This is reinforced by the statement from Informant 4, a practitioner:

"To strengthen the role of early adopters, benchmarking can be conducted with others who share similar intentions regarding the use of social media to market their products."

This practice aligns with the principles of "relative advantage" and "compatibility" in the diffusion of innovations; digital media is viewed as a tool to expand market reach and enhance the competitiveness of the tourism village without abandoning the social context familiar to the community. Digitalization also enables women to participate directly in branding processes, reducing their total reliance on external parties. Thus, Informant 1 can be identified as an early adopter of digital innovation who adapted it to meet local community needs.

Research on women's empowerment regarding the adoption of agricultural innovations in Tulung Rejo Village demonstrates that women play an increasingly vital role in community-based village development. Women are no longer positioned merely as support figures in domestic tasks or traditional agriculture; instead, they have evolved into active participants in the management, development, and marketing of agricultural produce. (Sujarwo et al., 2017). The involvement of women in these various activities demonstrates a shift in social roles that contributes to improving the welfare of rural communities. Through a community-based development approach, the empowerment process actively engages the community, thereby providing women with greater opportunities to voice ideas, make decisions, and develop their skills. The adoption of agricultural innovations encompasses not only the use of more effective farming techniques but also the utilization of digital media for the promotion and marketing of agricultural products.

These innovations help rural communities increase the economic value of their produce while expanding market access. The study also reveals that women's empowerment positively impacts the community's social and economic resilience. Women become more independent, gain confidence in participating in the public sphere, and are able to build collaborations with other community groups. Furthermore, women's involvement in agricultural innovation fosters community solidarity and strengthens the local economy by leveraging village-specific potential (Hamid et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the process of adopting agricultural innovations still faces several challenges. Limited access to technology, low digital literacy, a lack of continuous training, and a patriarchal culture that continues to influence the division of gender roles act as obstacles to optimizing women's empowerment. (Adithyan et al., 2025).

Therefore, support from village governments, supporting organizations, and local communities is essential taking the form of training, mentoring, access to technology, and policies that foster women's participation in village development. Overall, this study concludes that community-based women's empowerment enhances the capacity to adopt agricultural innovations and strengthens sustainable village development. Women play a vital role in the community's social and economic transformation; thus, their contributions must be continuously supported, enabling them to serve as active, creative, and independent agents of village development.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that women's empowerment in Tulung Rejo Village occurs through women's involvement in processing agricultural produce and tourism activities, as well as the use of digital media to support promotion and information dissemination. Such involvement reveals that women not only participate in productive activities but also adapt to innovations emerging within economic activities based on local potential. In the context of community-based development, this process unfolds through interaction and collaboration among community members in utilizing the village's available resources.

Nevertheless, the process of adapting to innovation still faces several obstacles, particularly limited access to technology, a need for capacity building regarding digital media usage, and a lack of sustained training support. Findings regarding women's simultaneous engagement in domestic and productive activities also indicate that empowerment takes place within the context of complex daily lives. However, the research data are insufficient to conclude that there has been an increase in independence, self-confidence, control over income, or broader changes in gender power relations.

Based on these findings, women's empowerment in Tulung Rejo Village can be understood as a process of expanding women's involvement in economic activities and adapting to innovations based on local potential. Support in the form of training, mentoring, access to technology, and the strengthening of spaces for women's participation is required to ensure the sustainability of this process. Thus, this study affirms that a community-based development approach can provide a supportive context for women's involvement in the innovation adaptation process, while Diffusion of Innovation theory helps explain how the adoption and acceptance of new practices and technologies occur at the community level.

Declarations

M.S. and F.R.A. contributed to the conceptualization, research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for its content. This research received no specific funding from public, commercial, or not-for-profit organizations. The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for qualitative research, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and the protection of participants' confidentiality. The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to confidentiality and ethical considerations. Artificial intelligence-assisted tools were used for language refinement, grammatical correction, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript.

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