



**Gendered contributions in Bali's lontar leaf craft industry: A study of women in Bona Village, Bali**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The palm leaf craft industry in Bona Village has flourished since the 1950s, coinciding with the popularity of Kecak dance performances. This qualitative research explores women's involvement and gender-based roles in the industry. Observations and interviews with eight informants revealed a stark division of labor: men generally operate the machines, while women dominate the manual weaving techniques. Women's roles are crucial at every stage. In the pre-production stage, they collect raw materials. During the production process, women are responsible for washing, cutting, dyeing, and shaping the palm leaves into finished products. In the distribution stage, they distribute their products to local collectors and art markets outside the village. Although not the primary source of income for most families, this industry holds significant economic and social value, contributing to the cultural identity of Bona Village. Balinese women in Bona Village not only fulfill reproductive and socio-religious functions but also play key roles in production, possessing economic sovereignty. These findings confirm the existence of a cultural meritocracy in which women serve as social shock absorbers in the face of crises. Theoretically, this research enriches contextual feminist studies on the relationship between Balinese culture,*

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*gender relations, and the household economy. Practically, this study provides recommendations for strengthening women's bargaining power in the traditional crafts industry and recognizing their complex role as drivers of the national economy in the postmodern era.*

**Keywords:** Role; Women; Industry; Craft; Lontar Leaf.

## ABSTRAK

*Industri kerajinan daun lontar di Desa Bona telah berkembang sejak tahun 1950-an, beriringan dengan popularitas pertunjukan tari Kecak. Penelitian kualitatif ini mendalami keterlibatan perempuan dan pembagian peran berbasis gender dalam industri tersebut. Berdasarkan observasi dan wawancara dengan delapan informan, ditemukan pembagian kerja yang kontras: laki-laki umumnya mengoperasikan mesin, sementara perempuan mendominasi teknik anyaman manual. Peran perempuan sangat krusial di setiap tahapan. Pada tahap pra-produksi, mereka mengumpulkan bahan baku. Selama proses produksi, perempuan bertanggung jawab mencuci, memotong, mewarnai, hingga membentuk lontar menjadi produk jadi. Pada tahap distribusi, mereka menyalurkan hasil karya ke pengepul lokal maupun pasar seni di luar desa. Meskipun bukan sumber pendapatan utama bagi sebagian besar keluarga, industri ini memiliki nilai ekonomi dan sosial yang signifikan sebagai identitas budaya Desa Bona. Perempuan Bali di Desa Bona tidak hanya menjalankan fungsi reproduktif dan sosio-religius, tetapi juga berperan sebagai aktor kunci dalam produksi yang memiliki kedaulatan ekonomi. Temuan ini mengonfirmasi adanya meritokrasi budaya di mana perempuan berfungsi sebagai social shock absorber dalam menghadapi krisis. Secara teoritis, penelitian ini memperkaya studi feminisme kontekstual mengenai hubungan antara budaya Bali, relasi gender, dan ekonomi rumah tangga. Secara praktis, studi ini memberikan rekomendasi untuk memperkuat posisi tawar perempuan dalam industri kerajinan tradisional serta mengakui peran kompleks mereka sebagai penggerak ekonomi nasional di era postmodern.*

**Kata Kunci:** Peran; Perempuan; Industri; Kerajinan; Daun Lontar.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For decades, women's contributions in the public sphere have often gone unrecognized, resulting in their work being overlooked by various parties, from the government, husbands, families, development planners, and census officials. Hasyim, Indriani, & Sayekti (2022) found that the role of wives in dual-earner families, where the wife works as a laborer in an agricultural company, remains heavily constrained by gender stereotypes. Domestic gender roles (cooking) are assigned to wives, while social roles are assigned to husbands (for example, invitations to social events from the village office are often directed to husbands). This occurs due to a process of social construction that has persisted from one generation to the next.

The root of this problem stems from a narrow view that defines real work only as activities performed by men. In other words, by definition, only men's work is considered real

work. The logical consequence of this construction is that even if women work and receive wages, their wages are not as high as men's (Mosse, 2007). However, women are not passive entities subject to control (Swastini, Erviantono, & Noak, 2025). Therefore, this situation of marginalization is no longer relevant in the development of modern society, especially since, according to Martin and Voorhies in Sanderson (2011), gender roles are predicted to increasingly fade in the future. Furthermore, Sanderson (2011) argues that capitalism and industrialization have pushed women into the production process, ultimately elevating their status. Thus, in the context of the postmodern era, women's economic contributions have undergone a significant repositioning, shifting from a restrictive domestic narrative to a recognition of their economic autonomy. The implication is that women are no longer confined to domestic roles but are recognized as fully sovereign subjects in the public sphere and the marketplace.

This is reflected in data showing that MSMEs, which contribute 60% of GDP and absorb 97% of the workforce, are a fundamental pillar of the Indonesian economy. Its significance is further emphasized by the fact that 64.5% of MSME owners are women. This data not only confirms women's role as the backbone of the family economy but also positions them as key architects driving the national economic engine (Bayumi, Jaya, & Shalilah, 2022). Therefore, in Bali, women's participation in productive work is not a new phenomenon. Within the socio-cultural context of Balinese society, women's economic contributions have shaped a deeply rooted tradition of meritocracy since ancient times, a system that emphasizes individual ability. Balinese women have been involved in various fields of work, such as crafts, agriculture, art, and trade. Women's roles in these fields are not merely complementary but rather key actors, organizing, controlling, and overseeing the progress of these activities (Asih, 2018).

This trend continues to this day and is even growing. For instance, the women of Bona Village, Blahbatuh District, Gianyar Regency, exhibit this trend. Women in Bona Village actively make bags, hats, baskets, and various types of *penjor* (traditional Javanese ornaments) from palm leaves. As a leading center for palm leaf crafts in Gianyar, Bona Village markets its products not only domestically but also internationally. It is noteworthy that women in this village are fully involved in the entire value chain, from raw material collection and craft production to distribution and marketing.

Studied during the COVID-19 pandemic, Yoga (2020) emphasized the strategic role of Balinese women as pillars of family resilience during the multidimensional crisis. As agents of family resilience, Balinese women not only fulfill their reproductive function by ensuring the health of family members and supporting children's learning but also play a productive role by increasing household income. What is distinctive is how they simultaneously maintain their socio-religious roles by ensuring the desire to perform rituals during the pandemic while also serving as psychological support for their families. This finding confirms the concept of the triple role in the context of the crisis, as well as the emphasis on Balinese women as social shock absorbers within the resilience structure of Balinese society.

Bona Village is not just a craft center, but rather an ecosystem where tradition, the economy, and women's roles are uniquely intertwined. The correlation between the three can be explained by the activities of artisans who grew in other areas purely for commercial market needs, while the palm-leaf palm industry in Bona has grown alongside the history of the Kecak Dance since the 1950s. Furthermore, Bona Village Bona is known as a center for specializing

in palm leaves (as opposed to bamboo or rattan, which are more common in Bali). The use of this material requires a high level of patience in the cutting, dyeing, and hand-weaving processes, which are strongly associated with "women's handicrafts". This allows researchers to examine how the identity of the material (palm leaves) shapes the gender identities of the artisans. Furthermore, and importantly, the discovery that men operate the machines while women focus on manual weaving creates a rich space for discussions about the politics of technology. Bona Village serves as a real-life laboratory to examine whether the use of technology widens role gaps or creates new spaces for collaboration between genders. Based on these points, Bona Village is a unique subject for study compared to research conducted in other regions.

This research examines the implementation of gender-based role divisions and analyzes their contribution to family well-being. Theoretically, the results of this study are expected to enrich knowledge, particularly in the development of feminist theory and gender studies in understanding the relationship between Balinese culture, gender relations, and household economics. Practically, this research can reveal the complexity of women's roles in productive spaces bound by cultural values, provide recommendations for strengthening women's bargaining power in the traditional craft industry, and provide an overview of Balinese women's complex roles in meeting various social, cultural, and economic demands, as well as their broader impact on families and the surrounding community.

The evolution of Balinese women's economic roles is not a contemporary phenomenon but rather has a documented historical continuity dating back to ancient Bali. Balinese women's ability to fulfill a variety of roles spanning domestic, economic, and religious-customary spheres, even in uncertain socio-economic conditions, represents a form of culturally institutionalized gender resilience. Empirical evidence from various historical periods indicates that Balinese women are not merely passive actors in social structures but play a strategic role in maintaining the economic systems of families and communities. These findings call for deconstructing simplistic narratives that marginalize women in Balinese economic history, while emphasizing the importance of a contextual feminist perspective in understanding gender relations in Balinese society.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section provides an explanation of the current state of the research and cites previous scholarly works as sources. Umihani (2024) revealed that women's contribution to the mangrove batik creative economy in Mojo Village is multidimensional, encompassing economic, religious, and social aspects. Its development strategy is formally implemented through comparative studies, IPR registration, and government partnerships. Similarities with the context of palm leaf crafts lie in the central role of women throughout the production chain as guardians of culture and strengthening social cohesion. However, there are significant differences: the mangrove batik industry integrates religious dimensions and formal-structural development strategies, while palm leaf crafts in Bali rely more on organic strategies based on family heritage and the preservation of hereditary traditions.

Meanwhile, research by Prakoso (2020) highlights the dominance of women in the entire pottery production process in Semampir Hamlet, Yogyakarta, while men only play a role in the firing and distribution stages. This phenomenon is triggered by societal views that place

women in the domestic sphere, resulting in them assuming dual roles as craftspeople and preservers of inherited traditions. The focus of this research was on women's efforts to improve their quality of life to meet the demands of both spheres. This differs from this study, which specifically focuses on women's roles in the palm leaf craft home industry in Bona Village, Gianyar.

Handayani & Iannone (2025) successfully identified that the craft industry is not simply a space of economic production, but rather an arena for the reproduction of symbolic violence, where gender inequality and power hierarchies are normalized through cultural values such as *sungkan* (respect for women) and *ewuh pakewuh* (obedience to women). *Sungkan* (respect for women) becomes an instrument of symbolic violence that suppresses the autonomy of artisans in Kediri, while in Bona Village, this "compliance" is manifested through the harmonious integration of customary obligations and economic productivity. While (Handayani & Iannone, 2025) view women's roles as a form of reproduction of subordination that limits access to innovation, the perspective in Bona Village shows that this dual role is actually seen as a strength of identity and a source of economic agency. Thus, the difference lies in the ultimate impact: in Kediri, the focus is on the hierarchical restrictions on women's mobility, while in Bona, the emphasis is more on women's ability to negotiate autonomy amidst a very strong traditional structure.

Furthermore, research by Rangga, Syarif, Ibnu, & Widiastri (2023) revealed that female farmers in Bali Sadhar Village play a vital role in improving family welfare through active involvement in three domains simultaneously: reproductive, productive, and social. As economic actors in the rice paddy sector, women not only support their husband's income but also manage the family's survival strategies amidst economic constraints. This finding is highly relevant to the phenomenon in Bona Village, where the palm leaf craft industry exhibits a similar pattern: women's domestic space is transformed into a strategic production unit. The similarity lies in women's ability to balance domestic roles with economic productivity, but in Bona Village, this role expands beyond simply meeting basic needs to preserving cultural identity and adapting to the tourism market, which includes creating unique crafts that attract visitors and promote local heritage. Thus, both studies affirm that women's agency, both in the agricultural sector and the creative industry, is key to stable well-being that harmoniously integrates social obligations and financial independence.

In the context of the Balinese phenomenon, the study by Kurniawan, J. S., & Mulyani (2018) study in Seminyak focused on the role of women in the Banten industry, which is oriented towards the ritual needs and traditional structures of the Banjar. The originality of the study in Bona Village lies in its analysis of the transformation of its products from ritual tools to art commodities and tourism souvenirs. This research explores how women creatively adapt to international market demands without losing the cultural essence of palm leaves. While Amrita & Herlambang (2019) provide empirical evidence that individual qualities such as education and experience increase the productivity of female artisans in Bali, the study in Bona Village offers a more in-depth perspective on sociocultural aspects. In Denpasar, the *canang sari* industry is considered a linear economic opportunity, while in Bona Village, the *lontar* industry is viewed as a more complex arena. Thus, the study in Bona Village complements Amrita's findings by explaining that Balinese women's productivity is not simply a matter of

output figures, but rather the result of their extraordinary ability to balance the pressures of dual roles that are often considered “natural” but symbolically demand significant energy.

Research in Bona Village is novel in that it positions the palm leaf craft industry not merely as a subordinate domestic activity but as a strategic production unit demonstrating women's active agency. Unlike previous studies, this study reveals that women in Bona are able to negotiate autonomy amidst a very strong traditional structure, transforming ritual tools into global art commodities without losing their cultural essence. Socioculturally, this study complements the discourse on Balinese women's productivity by emphasizing that their success is not only measured by economic output figures but also by their extraordinary ability to harmonize the pressures of dual roles, customary obligations, and international market demands as an independent identity force.

### 3. METHOD

The research method used in this study was qualitative. Data were obtained through three data collection techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document study. Observations focused on the activities of female artisans at all stages of production, from pre-production, production, and post-production. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the informant's perceptions and experiences regarding their involvement in the palm leaf craft industry. Eight informants participated in this study, including the Bona Village Head and artisans actively producing palm leaf crafts. These informants were selected using purposive sampling, which met the informant criteria required for this study. Document study was used to enrich the analysis with relevant secondary data. There are four important components: the data collection stage and the data analysis stage, which consists of three steps: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

- a. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with female artisans, community leaders, and business owners in Bona Village. Systematic observations were conducted at palm leaf (*lontar*) craft workshops, and archival documents regarding the village's history since the 1950s were reviewed to understand the evolution of the Kecak Dance and its connection to the craft industry.
- b. Data condensation. During this stage, the vast amount of raw data from field notes and interview transcripts was simplified and transformed. Data were categorized into specific codes such as domestic roles, productive roles, and socio-religious resilience.
- c. Presentation. The condensed data were organized into systematic formats to enable the drawing of conclusions. Comparative tables were used to map the division of labor, specifically showing how men operated machinery while women focused on manual weaving. Detailed accounts were written to explain the “triple role” of Balinese women as social shock absorbers during the pandemic and as primary family economic drivers.
- d. Conclusion drawing and verification. In the final stage, the researcher identified patterns and meanings from the displayed data. Preliminary findings were cross-checked through triangulation and member checking with the women of Bona Village to ensure the accuracy of the interpretations. It was concluded that the economic contribution of women in Bona was not a contemporary byproduct of industrialization but a form of “culturally institutionalized gender resilience” that has persisted since ancient times.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. *The Role of Balinese Women in the Economy over Time*

The discourse on women's dual roles gained formal legitimacy in Indonesia through MPR Decree No. IV/MPR/1978, marking their active participation in the public sector (Purawati, 2015). Wijaya (2023) identified Queen Kencono Wulan as an influential figure in commerce while linking women's trade participation to household commodities. Furthermore, epigraphic evidence from ancient Balinese inscriptions (9th–12th centuries AD) confirms that gender stratification in crafts, agriculture, and trade has been institutionalized since the classical period (Asih, 2018).

In the contemporary context, the role of Balinese women has evolved into a triple-role integrative model, encompassing family, economic, and religious responsibilities (Oktarina & Komalasari, 2023). While this is often viewed as a double burden, research in Bona Village offers a different perspective. Rather than viewing this dual role as an absolute negative burden, it is demonstrated that for Bona women, the integration of these roles constitutes a vital cultural identity. The sustainability of the lontar industry in Bona proves that unique Balinese gender relations characterized by organic cooperation between men and women are essential to maintaining the balance of *Tri Hita Karana* (*Palemahan, Pawongan, and Parahyangan*).

### 4.2. *Overview of the Palm Leaf Craft Industry in Bona Village*

Bona Village in Blahbatuh District, Gianyar, is one of Bali's art villages. This artistic identity is supported by various art forms, with palm leaf weaving as its flagship product. Since ancient times, Bona Village has been recognized as a center for this craft, a position that has persisted even though many other villages have imitated its craft model (Wulandari & Darsana, 2017). Based on interviews, palm leaf weaving has been a tradition passed down through generations in Bona Village since the 1930s. One informant revealed that this skill was taught by parents as a source of additional income from childhood. Thus, the palm leaf weaving craft industry in Bona Village is dominated by local residents who have inherited and continued the family business from generation to generation. The following is an excerpt from an interview with the Village Head of Bona Village.

*"...if I'm not mistaken, the custom of weaving from palm leaves has existed since the 1930s and continues to this day. There are still craftsmen, meaning it's passed down from generation to generation..."* (Interview with Mr. I Gusti Nyoman Gede Susila, October 30, 2023).

Thanks to the high interest and demand from tourists, this weaving tradition later developed into an industry. The industrialization of palm leaf crafts began in the 1950s, along with the arrival of foreign tourists to watch the Kecak Dance performance. Seeing this opportunity, the craftsmen then took the initiative to produce woven hats to protect tourists from the hot sun. This innovation succeeded in making woven palm leaf hats a typical souvenir of Bona Village. The development of the palm leaf craft industry in Bona Village was marked by product diversification. In addition to hats, in the 1950s, woven fans also became a mainstay product for tourists watching the Kecak Dance.

However, this industry is not immune to fluctuations. According to Wulandari & Darsana (2017), in 2014, demand dropped drastically due to a lack of tourist visits and increased competition from other villages. Furthermore, informants linked the decline in income to two major events: the Bali Bombings I (2002) and Bali Bombings II (2005), which led to a decline in foreign tourist arrivals, and the Covid-19 pandemic. However, after the Bali Bombings I and II, artisans in Bona Village responded positively by innovating to produce local necessities such as *penjor* (traditional Javanese traditional lanterns) and various other religious ceremonial items. This diversification strategy aims to ensure the sustainability of the palm leaf crafting industry in the area. Furthermore, the Head of Bona Village explained the industry cycle, which includes raw material sourcing, production processes, and distribution of finished products. He explained that the primary raw materials are sourced from various regions, both within Bali, such as Karangasem, and from outside the island, such as Sumbawa and Sulawesi. The following is an excerpt from the interview:

*“...however, after the first and second Bali bombings, local artisans here tried to innovate their palm-leaf palm crafts to maintain their growth. They began producing local necessities such as penjor (palm leaves) and canang jejaitan (hand-made ornaments) for ceremonies. Therefore, most shops in Bona now sell penjor decorations...”* (Interview with Mr. I Gusti Nyoman Gede Susila, October 30, 2023).

The raw material supply process for palm leaf crafts in Bona Village is carried out through a structured distribution chain. A dedicated agent is tasked with collecting and distributing raw materials to collectors, who then pass them on to artisans. The artisans then process these raw materials into finished products based on orders from the collectors. Thus, the production or processing of raw materials is handled solely by the artisans. However, the current marketing and distribution process generally restricts the sale of craft products to local markets. Collectors, who typically own shops, are the primary actors in this distribution. Although exports once reached international markets such as Europe and Russia, exports have been discontinued due to various constraints, including increased shipping costs, regulatory challenges, and changing market demands. Instead, marketing has shifted to art markets and tourist areas in Bali, such as Sukawati Art Market, Ubud, Kuta, and Sanur.

The *lontar* palm handicraft industry in Bona Village demonstrates a clear division of roles between collectors and artisans. Collectors, who typically own shops (art shops), focus on distributing and marketing products to the local market. They act as intermediaries, managing orders from consumers outside the region, connecting consumers with artisans, and providing raw materials for production. Artisans, on the other hand, play a central role in the production process. They work on orders from their homes, and upon completion, the crafts are collected by collectors for distribution to consumers. Women dominate the *lontar* palm handicraft industry in Bona Village, with roles spanning the entire process from production to distribution. Meanwhile, male participation is generally limited to mobilizing or transporting products. This phenomenon is reinforced by the statement of an informant, Mrs. Nyoman, who confirmed that most of the artisans who collect raw materials from her shop are women. She added that most

men in the village choose to work in the agricultural sector, such as farming in the rice fields. Here's an excerpt from the interview:

*“...men are rare. If they are, they're usually in the rice fields. Even the people who work in my shop are mostly women rather than men...”* (Interview with Mrs. Nyoman, August 19, 2023)

#### 4.3. *The Role of Women in the Palm Leaf Craft Industry in Bona Village*

Women dominate the palm leaf (*lontar*) craft industry in Bona Village, representing not only a social phenomenon but also a form of economic matriarchy, which can be measured through business ownership data. Documentation shows that of the 53 registered business units, 74%, or 39 businesses, are owned and managed entirely by women. This confirms women's position as the primary controllers of productive assets at the village level and contextualizes productive roles within Moser's framework.

In contrast, a study conducted by Prami & Widiastuti (2023) in Pakseballi Village, Klungkung Regency, found that women in the Balinese craft sector carry out complex dual roles, encompassing responsibilities in the domestic sphere such as childcare and household chores, as well as roles in the public sphere, including providing for the family and social roles as customary members. This point is quite relevant to the research in Bona Village, although in Bona Village, three roles (triple roles) were identified for women. This relevance is also evident in the technical division of labor, where women retain full control over the detailed and aesthetically valuable manual processes, such as the frame decoration (*ngulat and nungkubin*) and dyeing (*mrade*), which parallels the diligence of female artisans in Bona Village in maintaining the authenticity of their handwoven fabrics. The tenacity of the women of Bona Village in manual weaving was also conveyed by the following informant:

*“...the men here usually work as the ikat weavers. There are usually full weaves and some that use ikat machines. The full weaves are practically 100% done by women, while the weaves that use ikat are usually helped by their husbands, because they have a lot of work. But it's rare for the men to come here to make deposits. The most they'll say is that there are guests wanting to order...”* (Interview with Ms. Wayan Ariani, May 16, 2023).

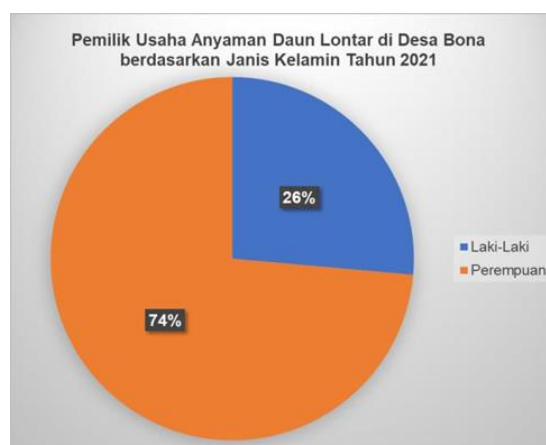
However, the research findings in Pakseballi Village provide a contrasting critical perspective to strengthen the analysis of women's agency in Bona Village. While in Pakseballi Village, gender inequality is found in the form of restricted access to business ownership, which is entirely claimed by men, and women's status as unpaid volunteer labor. The data on business ownership by women in Bona Village, which reaches 74%, indicates a much more advanced level of economic independence and agency shift amidst a persistent patriarchal culture.

Women in Bona Village are not merely participants in development; they are the backbone of the local economy, having consistently driven this industry since the 1950s, demonstrating that their economic contribution is a fundamental prerequisite for village development, as mandated by Law No. 6 of 2014. The sustainability of this industry for more than nine decades, with roots dating back to the 1930s, demonstrates a harmonious interaction between reproductive (domestic) and productive roles through intergenerational inheritance.

The process of transferring skills from mother to daughter from an early age is a form of cultural capital investment that occurs within the domestic sphere. According to Moser, weaving at home allows Bona women to manage childcare and household responsibilities without neglecting their economic obligations. This was evident during the peak demand period in the 1980s, when manual skills learned in the domestic sphere enabled Bona products to penetrate international markets, reaching Europe and Russia.

Furthermore, women's involvement in providing religious ceremonial items, such as *penjor* decorations, reflects a specific community managing role within Balinese culture. When the industry faced severe challenges following the Bali Bombings I (2002), Bali Bombings II (2005), and the Covid-19 pandemic, Bona women proactively reoriented production from tourist souvenirs to ritual tools. This role transcends mere economics; it is a social contribution to maintaining traditional continuity and the balance of Tri Hita Karana. The product diversification strategy that began during President Sukarno's era, evolving from hats to bags, wallets, and *petal* (jewelry containers) showcases women's agency in balancing market needs with the social-religious demands of their community.

Although the *lontar* craft is currently often regarded as a sideline activity due to market fluctuations, the existence of 39 women-owned business units remains a primary pillar for preserving local wisdom through the integration of these three roles. A clear technological segregation exists where men are more involved in machinery and transportation, while women maintain full control over the manual weaving techniques that constitute the core of the product's authenticity. This analysis concludes that the dedication of women in Bona Village is a manifestation of a sophisticated survival strategy; they manage a triple workload (productive, reproductive, and community) not as an absolute burden, but as a cultural identity that ensures the resilience of a local-based creative economy amidst global dynamics. The following is data on palm leaf weaving business owners in Bona Village mapped by gender for 2021.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Palm Leaf Business Owners in Bona Village (Data processed by the author, 2023).

Based on field findings, women's participation in the palm leaf craft industry reaches 95%, dominating all stages from production to distribution, while men's roles are limited to long-distance mobilization. This fact not only confirms quantitative dominance but also women's position as key actors in the sustainability of local culture-based industries. The main

characteristic of this industry is its hereditary nature, where the transfer of weaving skills across generations positions women as guardians of culture and economic actors. Their role is integral, spanning the full value chain from pre-production to production to post-production, with the mother or senior female figure as the primary driver within the family unit. Women's contribution to Indonesia's economic development is transversal, meaning it crosses and connects various aspects of life, especially social, economic, and cultural (Manova, 2025). In the socio-religious realm, their participation even transcends traditional gender boundaries, such as by becoming a *gamelan* player (*megambel*) in traditional ceremonies. However, women's political participation remains marginal. The following is information from the Head of Bona Village:

*"... in the social sector, the role of women is extraordinary, even surpassing that of men. If you look at the current time, women also take up many men's activities, such as megambel. However, in the political sector, women have not yet dominated, but there are a number of women who are involved, although they are still very limited..."* (Interview with Mr. I Gusti Nyoman Gede Susila, 30 October 2023)

Economically, they are a pillar of the village economy, with 80% of market traders dominated by women. However, the financial contribution of the lontar industry is often complementary. The majority of craftsmen categorize it as a side job due to limited market demand and low product selling value, so that livelihood diversification is inevitable. Here are quotes from several informants that demonstrate this:

*"...I can't just rely on this. I run a shop next door. I also sell groceries and other daily necessities. This is just a side job so my mother has something to do too. Understandably, she's getting older and needs to move around a lot to keep her bones from stiffening..."* (Interview with Mr. Nyoman Winaya, son of Mrs. Ketut Canis, May 27, 2023).

*"...I have other jobs because I can't rely solely on this craft business. I only do part-time work because it's not enough to cover my daily expenses. Sometimes I only earn 30,000 rupiah a day. That's why none of my children continue this work at all. Only those my age and older are still willing to work like this. Even my grandchildren don't know how to weave now..."* (Interview with Mrs. Nyoman, June 7, 2023).

*"...I also often make endek cloth, and if I don't have any thread, I make lontar. The lontar is actually a side job, but the main thing is selling this cloth. Once I'm done weaving, I take it home to people's homes..."* (Interview with Ibu Mangku, May 26, 2023).

Only a handful of business units, such as "Kios Lontar Bali", can make it their main source of income. The following is an explanation from Mrs. Tami's daughter, a Kios Lontar Bali owner.

*"...for my mother, this is her main source of income. There are no side jobs. You could say it's a family business, but I'm married and my husband also works. As for my mother, this is all she can say..."* (Interview with Mrs. Ariani, May 16, 2023).

The implications of these findings suggest that the strategic value of women's roles cannot be reduced solely to financial contributions but rather to their dedication to maintaining traditions, driving the creative economy, and supporting family well-being, as argued by Click or tap here to enter text. Thus, the participation of women in Bona Village serves as empirical evidence of how gender role construction positively correlates with village development and economic sustainability based on local wisdom.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The role of women in the palm leaf crafting in Bona Village is a manifestation of economic agency closely intertwined with cultural preservation. Unlike mere laborers or passive domestic workers, women in Bona play a key role, managing strategic production units in their homes. This industry has survived for more than seven decades not due to formal bureaucratic intervention, but rather thanks to organic resilience through the intergenerational transmission of skills carried out by women, which has allowed them to adapt to changing economic conditions and maintain their livelihoods.

Socioculturally, women in Bona demonstrate an extraordinary ability to negotiate roles. On the one hand, they continue to fulfill the reproductive and socio-religious obligations deeply rooted in Balinese tradition. On the other hand, they creatively transform products that were once merely ritual objects into art commodities and tourist souvenirs with global economic value. This demonstrates that their productivity is not simply a matter of output but rather the result of a dynamic balance in managing the pressures of dual roles that are often considered "natural" but are actually a source of identity strength and family financial independence.

In conclusion, the industry in Bona Village confirms that women's domestic space is not a barrier but rather a centre of innovation where traditions are maintained and adapted to ensure family well-being and the sustainability of Balinese cultural heritage. Moving forward, collaborative efforts are required to strengthen the creative industry ecosystem in Bona Village by prioritizing the empowerment of women as key actors. Local and village governments are advised to provide specific support in digital literacy and financial management for the 39 women-owned business units to regain the export potential that peaked in the 1980s. Additionally, the formalization of these businesses into cooperatives or female-led artisan associations is essential to strengthen their bargaining power in art markets and facilitate access to communal Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) protection. For the community, the documentation of traditional knowledge regarding weaving techniques must be enhanced to ensure the continuity of cultural transmission, as this knowledge is vital for preserving their heritage and empowering future generations of artisans. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore the occupational health of female artisans to ensure that high economic productivity remains in harmony with their physical well-being as the guardians of local wisdom.

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