

Cultural Anchors of Entrepreneurship: Evaluating the Mediating Role of Community Empowerment among Indigenous Papuan Micro-Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

Micro-enterprises are a key driver of grassroots economies, and the empowerment of Indigenous Papuan entrepreneurs has been a focal point for the Department of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and MSMEs in the City of Jayapura. Diverging from prior studies that primarily discuss the role of local governments in empowering MSMEs descriptively without empirically examining inter-variable mechanisms, this research positions community empowerment as a mediating variable between local culture and entrepreneurial abilities—a relationship yet unexplored within the context of Indigenous Papuan MSMEs. This study aims to investigate the department's role in empowering MSMEs for Indigenous Papuans and analyze the direct and indirect effects of local culture on the entrepreneurial abilities of Indigenous Papuans in Jayapura City through community empowerment. A mixed-method approach was employed for this research (quantitative and qualitative). Quantitative data from 65 Indigenous Papuan micro-entrepreneurs were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS, while qualitative data were analyzed following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model. The findings indicate that local culture significantly influences community empowerment (coefficient 0.470; t-statistic 4.071; p-value 0.000) and entrepreneurial abilities (coefficient 0.445; t-statistic 3.660; p-value 0.000). Community empowerment significantly impacts entrepreneurial abilities (coefficient 0.321; t-statistic 2.704; p-value 0.007). Indirectly, local culture significantly affects entrepreneurial abilities through community empowerment (coefficient 0.151; t-statistic 2.183; p-value 0.029). Local culture and community empowerment collectively account for 43.5% of the variance in entrepreneurial abilities. These findings underscore that preserved local culture, supported by community empowerment, can enhance the entrepreneurial abilities of Indigenous Papuan MSMEs, while also reinforcing the literature on the mediating role of community empowerment in indigenous entrepreneurship contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Micro-enterprises are recognized as a key pillar of economic strength that bolsters a nation's economy. The empowerment of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia has received significant attention over time, particularly through initiatives like the MSME upgrading program towards digital transformation, supported by the Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. In 2020, the contribution of MSMEs to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was targeted at 61%, while in 2018 and 2019, their contributions to the GDP were 60.3% and 60%, respectively.

According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs and the Economic Census of the Central Statistics Agency in 2016, MSMEs absorbed up to 89.2% of the total workforce, provided about 99% of total employment opportunities, contributed to

60.34% of the national GDP, 14.17% of total exports, and 58.18% of total investments. The substantial contributions highlight the potential for MSME development, supported by a broad market, easily accessible raw materials, and a large labor force.

In the city of Jayapura, the Department of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and SMEs plays a pivotal role in nurturing micro-enterprises, supported by the Law Number 20 of 2008 and the Law Number 2 of 2021 on the Second Amendment to the Law Number 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua Province. The empowerment model implemented includes training, socialization, technical guidance, mentoring, and the provision of equipment grants. Data on the mentoring of micro-enterprises in the year 2023 and the number of MSMEs that have been nurtured are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Data on Micro-enterprise Mentoring in 2023

Business Type	OAP (Indigenous Papuan)	Non-OAP	Total
Handicraft	135	2	137
VCO (Virgin Coconut Oil)	2	0	2
Culinary	28	24	52
Batik	12	0	12
Kios (Kiosk/Stall)	107	50	157
Total	284	76	360

Source: SME Division and Industry Division

In 2023, mentoring involved 360 micro-enterprises, comprising 284 Indigenous Papuan entrepreneurs and 76 non-OAP units,

facilitated by the SME Division (155 units) and the Industry Division (205 units).

Table 2. Number of MSMEs in Jayapura City (2016–2022)

District	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
North Jayapura	317	208	225	279	1,457	575	n/a	3,061
South Jayapura	341	224	278	251	2,784	571	n/a	4,449
Abepura	365	246	369	217	1,022	577	n/a	2,796
Heram	293	221	186	220	630	567	n/a	2,117
Muara Tami	231	155	174	163	425	60	n/a	1,325
Total	1,547	1,054	1,232	1,130	5,935	2,850	n/a	13,748

Source: SME Division of Disperindagkop and SMEs of Jayapura City (2022)

During the period of 2016–2022, a total of 13,748 entrepreneurs were nurtured. Despite the department's role as a frontline in empowerment, its impact on the enhancement of Indigenous Papuan micro-entrepreneurs' entrepreneurship capacity is

deemed suboptimal: on average, entrepreneurs have not consistently maintained financial records, product organization is inadequate, lack of business and marketing plans, and hesitance in taking risks for business expansion.

A number of previous studies have highlighted the role of local governments in empowering MSMEs in various local contexts. Research on the role of local governments in empowering batik MSMEs in Banyuwangi Regency indicated that government facilitation – through skills training, cultural events, and ease of business permits – contributes to the sustainability of culture-based businesses, yet the research did not quantitatively measure local culture as a variable influencing entrepreneurs' capacity. Similarly, studies on the role of local governments in empowering Indigenous Papuan MSMEs in Biak Numfor Regency, as well as research on empowerment policies for Indigenous Port Numbay in the micro-trading sector in Jayapura City, were descriptive-qualitative and did not statistically test causal relationships among variables or the mediating role of community empowerment. At a broader level, studies on community-based economic empowerment strategies for seven indigenous tribes in Mimika Regency also indicated that the success of empowerment programs for indigenous communities in Papua is highly dependent on their alignment with the social structure and local cultural norms of the beneficiary communities, yet empirical measurement of the influence of local culture on entrepreneurship ability has not been conducted.

The research gap identified underscores the absence of empirical studies that examine, through structural equation modeling, the direct and indirect influence of local culture on the entrepreneurial capabilities of the Indigenous Papuans, either directly or indirectly through community empowerment as a mediating variable, supplemented by qualitative data on the concrete role of local agencies in the field. The novelty of this study lies in testing the mediating role of community empowerment in the relationship between local culture and entrepreneurial capabilities within the context of Indigenous Papuan MSMEs in Jayapura City, an aspect not explored in previous research.

Based on this background, the objectives of this research are: (1) to investigate the role of the Department of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and SMEs in empowering MSMEs for the Indigenous Papuans in Jayapura City; (2) to analyze the influence of local culture on community empowerment; (3) to analyze the effects of local culture and community empowerment on the entrepreneurial capabilities of the Indigenous Papuans; and (4) to examine the mediating role of community empowerment in the relationship between local culture and entrepreneurial capabilities in Jayapura City.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Local Culture and Entrepreneurship*

Local culture refers to the values cultivated by a community over time through natural processes of learning, encompassing artistic expressions, traditions, worldviews, or customary laws. In the context of entrepreneurship, local culture is not merely a preserved heritage but a form of social capital shaping how a community perceives economic opportunities. [1] affirm that indigenous entrepreneurship fundamentally relies on cultural perceptions of opportunities—what is considered a viable business opportunity is greatly influenced by the cultural values and worldviews of the community.

This assertion is supported by a study on socio-cultural factors as primary drivers of rural entrepreneurship in Oman, where communal norms and local social networks facilitate access to business resources not always available through formal channels [2]. In the Indonesian context, research on the internalization of Dayak cultural

values in fostering entrepreneurial interest among the youth reveals a similar pattern: the stronger the embeddedness of local cultural values, the higher the interest and willingness of the younger generation to engage in entrepreneurship leveraging regional potentials (Juliarsih et al., 2025). Similarly, [3] conclude that ventures utilizing cultural assets—such as traditional crafts, culinary heritage, and traditional knowledge—demonstrate a unique market position, strong community involvement, and resilience to economic fluctuations.

2.2 *Community Empowerment as a Mediator*

[4] posits that empowerment thrives on a power balance enabling broad participation. [5] defines empowerment as a transformative, participatory, and continuous process of community awareness, echoing [6] emphasis on building community capacity through encouragement, motivation, and awareness of inherent potentials.

[7], in a three-decade literature review on community enterprise and entrepreneurship, find that effective empowerment always involves strengthening collective community capacities, not merely individual interventions—a perspective relevant for understanding why empowerment cannot be divorced from the cultural context in which it operates. At the practical level in Papua, a study on seven native tribes in Mimika Regency indicates that community-based economic empowerment strategies are effective when programs are designed considering the social

structures and local beliefs of the beneficiary communities. These findings suggest that community empowerment within indigenous settings—including the Papuan Indigenous People in Jayapura—will be more effective when rooted in and mediated by prevailing local cultural values.

2.3 *Entrepreneurial Abilities*

Entrepreneurial abilities are commonly measured through dimensions of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and entrepreneurial motivations. [8], using the Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PEC) instrument on 206 farmers, finds that entrepreneurial competencies can be developed through business experiences and education, with risk-taking being a dimension typically rated lowest. On a broader conceptual level, [9] illustrates through a case study on community-based retail that community entrepreneurship fundamentally differs from individual entrepreneurship as its success hinges on collective involvement and social legitimacy rather than solely individual capabilities.

2.4 *Inter-Variable Relationships and Hypothesis Development*

Based on the theoretical studies above, the inter-variable relationships are outlined as follows:

H1: Local culture significantly influences community empowerment. Preserved local values facilitate the acceptance and effectiveness of empowerment programs due to alignment with existing community norms [7].

H2: Local culture significantly influences entrepreneurial abilities. Local culture shapes perceptions of

opportunities and entrepreneurial courage through communal inherited value frameworks [1].

H3: Community empowerment significantly influences entrepreneurial abilities. Planned empowerment interventions favoring marginalized groups enhance collective capacities that form individual entrepreneurial competencies [8], [9].

H4: Community empowerment mediates the influence of local culture on entrepreneurial abilities. The impact of local culture on

entrepreneurial abilities is not only direct but also channeled through the effectiveness of empowerment programs shaped by the cultural context [10].

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the four hypotheses, the conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in the following path model, demonstrating local culture as an exogenous variable influencing entrepreneurial capability both directly and indirectly through community empowerment as a mediating variable.

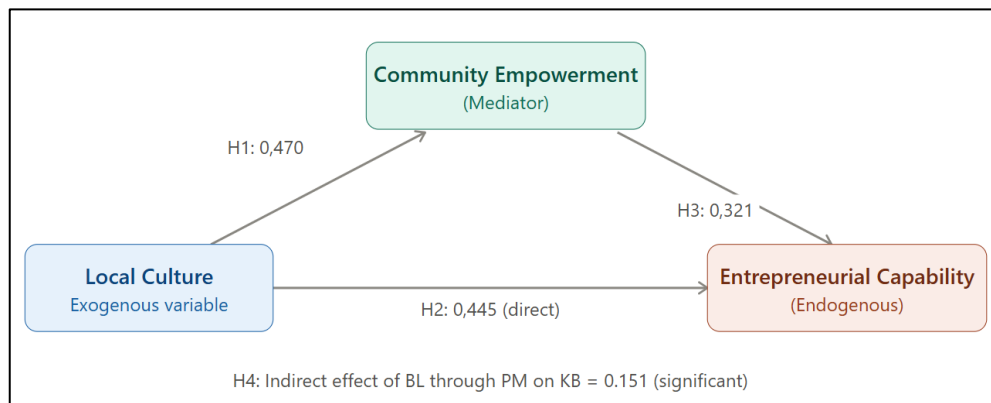


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODS

The research methodology employed in this study is a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The descriptive method was chosen due to the study's focus on ongoing events and current conditions. According to Bogdan and Taylor as cited in [11], qualitative research is a research procedure that yields descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observed social behaviors. The research was conducted in the city of Jayapura, specifically at the Office of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and SMEs.

The research population [12] consisted of 34 officials from the Office of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and SMEs in

Jayapura City, 10 facilitators from the SME and Industry Fields, and 360 micro-business owners of Indigenous Papuans. The sample included 4 office officials, 1 facilitator, and 65 micro-business owners of Indigenous Papuans, selected using purposive sampling technique based on criteria such as having received at least one form of assistance from the office in 2023 and representing the proportion of business types in Table 1. These 65 respondent micro-business owners were the data source for the questionnaire for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis.

Data collection techniques involved in-depth interviews, observation, documentation, and questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with the Head of the SME Field, Head of the SME

Empowerment Section, and Head of the Industry Information System Development Section with a set of 7 guiding questions, as well as with a facilitator and 6 micro-business owners of Indigenous Papuans without guided questions.

Qualitative data analysis followed the model proposed by [13] with three steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Quantitative analysis utilized Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Square (PLS) method using SmartPLS software. SmartPLS offers advantages such as requiring a relatively small sample size and not assuming normal data distribution due to its bootstrapping method. The processing involved two stages: the first stage was confirmatory factor analysis to obtain loading factors and factor scores for each dimension,

and the second stage involved SEM processing with input of the factor scores for each dimension. Loading factors above 0.7 were expected, while manifest variables with loading factors below 0.5 were to be reduced. Indicators were considered acceptable if the loading was above 0.5, composite reliability (CR) was above 0.70, and average variance extracted (AVE) was above 0.5, following the criteria outlined by [14].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The local cultural variable was assessed across three dimensions (12 items), community empowerment with three dimensions (12 items), and entrepreneurial capability with four dimensions (17 items), all measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 3 presents a summary of the mean descriptive scores per variable and dimension.

Variable	Dimension (Mean)	Overall Mean
Local Culture	• Tradition (BL1): 3.36	3.74
	• Attitude (BL2): 4.15	
	• Behavior (BL3): 3.72	
Community Empowerment	• Planned activities (PM1): 3.78	3.58
	• Priority for the vulnerable (PM2): 3.61	
	• Improving livelihoods (PM3): 3.34	
Entrepreneurial Capability	• Knowledge (KB1): 4.01	4.09
	• Skills (KB2): 3.94	
	• Attitude (KB3): 4.23	
	• Motivation (KB4): 4.21	

The average score of 3.74 for local cultural values indicates a well-preserved local culture among the Indigenous Papuans; with the tradition dimension (BL1) scoring the lowest at 3.36 and the attitude dimension (BL2) the highest at 4.15. The average community empowerment score of 3.58 is considered good, with the community improvement dimension (PM3) scoring the lowest at 3.34 and planned activities (PM1) the highest at 3.78. The average entrepreneurial

ability score of 4.09 is also good, with entrepreneurial skills (KB2) scoring the lowest at 3.94 and entrepreneurial attitude (KB3) the highest at 4.23.

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Measurement Model

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis at the dimensional level indicate that all loading factors are above 0.5, with CR and AVE values meeting the criteria.

Table 4. Summary of Latent Variable Measurement Model

Latent Variable	Dimension	Loading	CR (Composite Reliability)	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
Local Culture	Tradition	0.773	0.918	0.789
	Attitude	0.941		
	Behavior	0.941		

	Planned activities			
Community Empowerment	Priority for the vulnerable	0.906		
	Improving livelihoods	0.940	0.940	0.839
		0.901		
Entrepreneurial Capability	Knowledge	0.944		
	Skills	0.950		
	Attitude	0.927	0.964	0.869
	Motivation	0.908		

The latent variable of local culture exhibits the highest loading factor in the dimensions of attitude and behavior (equally strong), while the tradition dimension shows the weakest loading factor. Concerning community empowerment, the highest loading factor lies in the dimension of priorities for the weak, followed by planned activities, whereas improving community life is the weakest. In terms of entrepreneurial capability, the highest loading factor is in the dimension of entrepreneurial skills, followed by entrepreneurial knowledge, with entrepreneurial motivation being the weakest.

The discriminant validity test through cross-loading reveals that there are no loading values greater on other latent variables than on their own latent variables. The results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion indicate that the square root of AVE on the diagonal line (BL = 0.888; PM = 0.916; KB = 0.932) is greater than the correlations between latent variables (BL-PM = 0.470; BL-KB = 0.596; PM-KB = 0.530), thus confirming no issues with discriminant validity.

4.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. Verification Results of Inter-Variable Influence

Path	Hypothesis	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	R2	f2
BL → PM	H1	0.470	4.071	0.000	0.221	0.283
BL → KB	H2	0.445	3.660	0.000	0.435	0.273
PM → KB	H3	0.321	2.704	0.007	—	0.142
BL → PM → KB	H4	0.151	2.183	0.029	—	—

The R-Square value indicates that local culture has a 22.1% influence on community empowerment, while both local culture and community empowerment collectively have a 43.5% impact on entrepreneurial capability. As indicated by the effect size (f^2), local culture demonstrates a medium effect on both community empowerment and entrepreneurial capability, whereas community empowerment shows a small effect on entrepreneurial capability. Hypothesis testing was conducted using a critical t-value of 1.96 at a 5% significance level. All hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4) were found to be significant, with the rejection of H_0 and acceptance of H_a across all four paths, where all path coefficients were positive.

Discussion

The Role of the Department in Empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) for Indigenous Papuans

The Department of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and MSMEs in Jayapura City serves as a vital component in fostering grassroots economic empowerment, particularly for micro-entrepreneurs. Through interviews and observations, their implemented roles include providing business management training for micro-entrepreneurs, quality control cluster training for culinary product industry players, mentoring for micro-entrepreneurs and small industries in five districts since 2015, and product promotion and marketing through display spaces at the second floor passenger

terminal of Sentani Airport. In comparison to previous research on the role of local governments in empowering batik MSMEs in Banyuwangi Regency [15], the facilitator role of the local government in Banyuwangi encompasses skills training provision, local and regional exhibitions, specific batik events, online and offline marketplaces, regulations on traditional attire usage, business permit facilitation, and stimulus for People's Business Credit access. The more structured and cross-sectoral facilitation pattern in Banyuwangi indicates that the Department in Jayapura could expand its role, particularly in cultural-based incentive regulation and digital marketing integration. In accordance with the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2008, the government and local authorities facilitate business development in production and processing, marketing, human resources, as well as design and technology.

Observations indicate a lack of synchronization between the Industrial and Small and Medium Enterprises Divisions in mentoring, due to differing targets and entrepreneur data. The limited number of employees directly impacts field mentoring efforts: with the vast area of Jayapura City spanning 940 km² and five districts, the Industrial Division has 11 employees while the Small and Medium Enterprises Division has 9 employees.

The Influence of Community Empowerment on Indigenous Papuan Entrepreneurs

The empowerment model implemented by the department in 2023 includes business management training for 65 micro-entrepreneurs, quality control cluster training for culinary product industry players, mentoring for 155 micro-entrepreneurs in five districts, mentoring for 205 small industrial units, and promotional activities through display spaces. Since 2019, the Industrial Division has designated district-specific development focuses: Heram (noken industry), Abepura (batik industry), South Jayapura (salted fish industry), North Jayapura (handmade industry), and Muara Tami (other processed industries).

Statistical testing results confirm H3: community empowerment significantly influences entrepreneurial capabilities, with a positive path coefficient indicating that more effective community empowerment enhances entrepreneurial abilities. This finding aligns with [9], indicating that community-based entrepreneurship relies on collective involvement and social legitimacy, rather than just individual capabilities—explaining why empowerment interventions targeting community social structures, not just individual entrepreneurs, prove effective in the context of Indigenous Papuans. The largest loading factor on the community empowerment variable lies in the prioritization for the underprivileged dimension, followed by planned activities, while improving the lives of the most vulnerable communities—indicating that community members perceive departmental empowerment programs more as acts of favoritism and formal planning rather than tangible improvements in their living standards.

The Influence of Local Culture on Community Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Abilities

H1 testing results indicate that local culture significantly influences community empowerment, with a positive path coefficient indicating that preserving local culture enhances the effectiveness of community empowerment. This finding is consistent with a study on seven indigenous tribes in Mimika Regency, showing that the success of empowerment programs depends on their alignment with the social-cultural structures of indigenous communities. The largest loading factor on the local culture variable lies in the attitudes and behaviors dimension, with the tradition dimension being the weakest—indicating that current Indigenous Papuan local culture is more internalized in values and daily behaviors rather than formal/ritualistic practices, in line with [1] view that indigenous community entrepreneurship is more determined by

cultural perceptions of opportunities rather than adherence to rigid traditions.

The findings of testing H2 indicate that local culture also significantly influences entrepreneurial capability, with a positive path coefficient—consistent with the findings of [3] that culturally based enterprises demonstrate resilience and strong community engagement. The largest loading factor on the entrepreneurial capability variable lies in the entrepreneurship skill dimension, followed by entrepreneurship knowledge, while entrepreneurship motivation is the weakest. This pattern aligns with [8] findings among farmers, where dimensions related to risk-taking and motivation tend to be weaker compared to knowledge and technical skills dimensions—suggesting that limited motivation and risk-taking are not unique issues to the Indigenous Papuan community but rather a common pattern among entrepreneur communities based on local resources that still rely on external support.

The results of testing H4 confirm the mediating role of community empowerment: indirectly, local culture significantly influences entrepreneurial capability through community empowerment. These findings bolster the arguments of [10] that strategies for advancing entrepreneurship among indigenous communities need to consider indirect pathways—local culture does not automatically translate into entrepreneurial capacity without being mediated by institutions or empowerment programs actively bridging the two.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the quantitative sample is limited to 65 micro-entrepreneurs in one city (Jayapura), thus generalizing the findings to other Indigenous Papuans in different regions of Papua—with significant cultural diversity and inter-tribal social structures—needs to be done cautiously. Secondly, the questionnaire data are self-report, which may introduce bias in respondents' self-perception of their entrepreneurial capabilities. Thirdly, this study did not statistically compare

entrepreneurial capabilities between Indigenous Papuan entrepreneurs and non-Indigenous Papuan entrepreneurs, despite support data indicating significant proportion differences between the two groups, which could be an informative comparative variable in future research.

5. CONCLUSION

MSMEs in Jayapura City has actively facilitated Indigenous Papuan micro-entrepreneurs through training and mentoring programs since 2012, its overall empowerment impact remains suboptimal. The findings indicate that current interventions are perceived more as administrative routines rather than strategic efforts to improve the tangible living standards of the most vulnerable entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the absence of protective measures against unfair market competition remains a significant gap in the department's empowerment framework.

Statistically, the study confirms that local culture significantly influences community empowerment, which in turn acts as a crucial mediator in enhancing the entrepreneurial capabilities of Indigenous Papuan micro-entrepreneurs. These findings theoretically extend the indigenous entrepreneurship literature by validating that cultural capital does not automatically translate into economic capacity; it requires a structured empowerment mechanism that aligns with communal social structures. The research proves that when empowerment programs are anchored in local cultural values, they effectively boost entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, thereby validating the research hypotheses.

Practically, it is recommended that the Department: (1) increase staffing capacity with specialized entrepreneurship training; (2) shift focus from formal planning to tangible community welfare improvements; (3) implement rigorous evaluations focused on the outcomes of assisted entrepreneurs; (4) equip field facilitators with modern business decision-making tools; and (5) design specific interventions to strengthen the weakest dimensions identified in this study:

entrepreneurial motivation and risk-taking propensity.

Future research should expand the geographical scope to other regions in Papua, incorporate comparative analysis between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs, and investigate moderating variables such as digital literacy and access to

financial capital. Ultimately, fostering sustainable indigenous entrepreneurship requires an empowerment ecosystem that goes beyond administrative support—one that deeply understands and integrates the prevailing local cultural values to drive meaningful economic transformation.

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