

RESEARCH ARTICLE



IMPLEMENTING MSME EMPOWERMENT POLICY TO STRENGTHEN BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS IN OGAN KOMERING ULU REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in regional economic development; however, their competitiveness remains constrained by limited managerial capacity, financing access, technology adoption, and market expansion. Although various MSME empowerment policies have been implemented, limited studies have examined how local government implementation processes, organizational capacity, stakeholder coordination, and regional characteristics influence program effectiveness. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the MSME Empowerment Program in improving business competitiveness at the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and formulate strategies for strengthening MSME empowerment policies. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a socio-legal and public policy implementation perspective. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation involving government officials, MSME actors, cooperatives, and relevant stakeholders. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, supported by the Van Meter and Van Horn policy implementation framework. The findings reveal that program implementation is supported by clear policy objectives, institutional commitment, and stakeholder collaboration, but remains constrained by limited resources, uneven mentoring, weak digital adaptation, and outcome-based monitoring limitations. This study contributes to public policy development by proposing a business profile-based empowerment approach that integrates organizational capacity, digital transformation, collaborative governance, and sustainable MSME competitiveness development.

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1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) constitute one of the most important pillars of economic development, particularly in developing countries. Their contribution extends beyond employment creation and income generation to strengthening local economic resilience and promoting inclusive economic growth. Due to their flexibility, utilization of local resources, and close connection with community needs, MSMEs are widely recognized as strategic instruments for reducing poverty and supporting regional economic development (Hayati & Fatarib, 2022). Nevertheless, despite their significant contribution to national and regional economies, many MSMEs continue to experience structural constraints, including limited managerial capability, inadequate access to financing, low technological adoption, weak product innovation, and restricted market access, all of which hinder their competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic business environment (Tambunan, 2019).

Recognizing these challenges, the Indonesian government has implemented various policies to strengthen MSME development through comprehensive empowerment programs. Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises emphasizes that MSME empowerment should be undertaken by creating a conducive business climate while facilitating business development to establish resilient and independent enterprises. This commitment is reinforced by Government Regulation Number 7 of 2021, which expands government responsibilities in business legality, financing, capacity building, mentoring, partnership development, digitalization, technology utilization, and market expansion (Golam et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2026). However, the effectiveness of these policies should not be evaluated solely based on administrative indicators such as budget realization or the number of

implemented activities. Instead, policy success should be reflected in tangible improvements in MSME productivity, innovation, business sustainability, and competitiveness (Annahar et al., 2023).

From the perspective of public administration, the implementation of MSME empowerment policies represents a critical stage that determines whether policy objectives can be translated into meaningful outcomes. Differences in business characteristics, managerial capacity, technology adoption, and market orientation imply that uniform empowerment approaches are unlikely to generate optimal results for all MSMEs. Consequently, local governments are required to design adaptive implementation strategies that respond to the specific needs of different business groups. Effective implementation therefore depends not only on policy design but also on organizational capacity, resource availability, stakeholder coordination, communication, and the ability of implementing agencies to deliver programs that correspond to local socio-economic conditions (Devereux et al., 2017).

These implementation challenges are evident in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, where the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs is responsible for implementing various empowerment initiatives, including business capacity development, legality facilitation, institutional strengthening, partnership development, and entrepreneurial assistance. Although numerous programs have been introduced, several implementation issues remain apparent. The uneven distribution of supporting economic institutions, limited accessibility of empowerment services, inconsistencies between planned and realized program implementation, and persistent constraints experienced by MSME actors indicate that the existence of government programs does not necessarily guarantee improvements in business competitiveness. These conditions suggest that evaluating MSME empowerment requires greater attention to the implementation process and its actual outcomes rather than relying exclusively on administrative achievements.

Previous studies on MSMEs have predominantly focused on business competitiveness, entrepreneurial development, digital transformation, financing, and marketing strategies. While these studies provide valuable insights into business performance, relatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding how local governments implement MSME empowerment policies within specific regional contexts. Existing research rarely integrates policy implementation variables with regional characteristics and MSME business profiles to explain why similar empowerment policies may produce different outcomes across regions (Philbin et al., 2022). This limitation indicates an important research gap in public policy studies, particularly concerning the interaction between policy design, implementing organizations, available resources, and local socio-economic environments in determining policy effectiveness.

To address this gap, this study adopts the policy implementation framework developed by (Meter & Horn, 1975). This framework explains that policy implementation is influenced by six interrelated variables: policy standards and objectives, resources, characteristics of implementing organizations, inter-organizational communication, implementers' disposition, and the social, economic, and political environment. Compared with approaches that primarily evaluate policy outputs, this framework enables a more comprehensive examination of the processes through which empowerment programs are implemented and identifies the factors that facilitate or constrain successful implementation. Considering that MSME empowerment involves multiple stakeholders and requires coordination among government agencies, financial institutions, business organizations, and local communities, (Meter & Horn, 1975), framework provides an appropriate analytical perspective for assessing implementation effectiveness.

Accordingly, this study offers a novel contribution by integrating a public policy implementation perspective with the objective of strengthening MSME competitiveness based on regional characteristics and business profiles. Rather than merely assessing the existence of empowerment programs, this research examines the extent to which program implementation corresponds with the actual needs of MSME actors and identifies factors influencing implementation effectiveness. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of policy implementation studies within the field of public administration while providing practical recommendations for improving MSME empowerment strategies through better program targeting, stakeholder coordination, business mentoring, digitalization support,

and outcome-oriented monitoring. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the MSME empowerment program implemented by the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, identify the factors influencing its implementation, and formulate strategies to strengthen MSME competitiveness through more adaptive and sustainable policy implementation.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the implementation of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Empowerment Program in improving business competitiveness at the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore the policy implementation process, institutional practices, stakeholder interactions, and contextual factors influencing program implementation rather than merely evaluating program outcomes (Kim et al., 2017). The overall research procedure adopted in this study is presented in Figure 1.

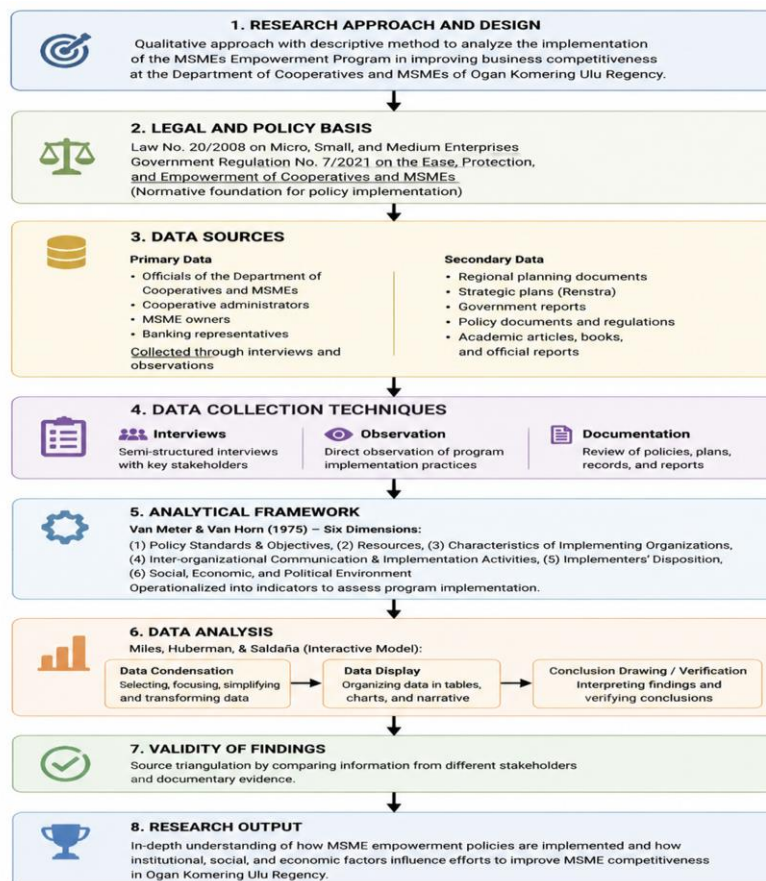


Figure 1. Research Methodological Framework
 Source: Processed by researchers (2026)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the study followed eight sequential stages, beginning with the research design and ending with the interpretation of findings. The research was conducted within a public policy implementation perspective by examining how MSME empowerment policies were translated into programs and implemented at the regional level. The analysis referred to the legal framework governing MSME development in Indonesia, particularly Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and Government Regulation Number 7 of 2021 concerning the Ease, Protection, and Empowerment of Cooperatives and MSMEs. These regulations served as the normative basis for assessing the consistency between policy objectives and implementation practices.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and direct observation involving purposively selected informants, including officials from the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, cooperative administrators, MSME owners, and representatives of financial institutions. Secondary data consisted of regional planning documents, strategic plans (Renstra), government reports, policy documents, regulations, and relevant academic publications. The combination of primary and secondary data provided comprehensive information regarding policy implementation and strengthened data credibility through triangulation. Three complementary data collection methods were employed: interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews explored stakeholders' perceptions and experiences regarding policy implementation, resource availability, institutional coordination, communication mechanisms, and implementation challenges. Direct observation was conducted to examine the implementation of empowerment activities in practice, while documentation analysis was used to review policy documents, planning reports, implementation records, and institutional performance.

The analytical framework was based on the policy implementation model developed (Meter & Horn, 1975). This model explains policy implementation through six interrelated dimensions: (1) policy standards and objectives, (2) resources, (3) characteristics of implementing organizations, (4) inter-organizational communication and implementation activities, (5) implementers' disposition, and (6) the social, economic, and political environment. These dimensions were operationalized as analytical indicators for evaluating the implementation of the MSME empowerment program. Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three iterative stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. The condensed data were then systematically presented in tables, matrices, and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure consistency between empirical evidence and analytical findings.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from different categories of informants with documentary evidence and field observations. This process enhanced the credibility and dependability of the findings by confirming the consistency of information across multiple data sources. The methodological process ultimately produced an in-depth understanding of how the MSME Empowerment Program was implemented by the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency and identified the institutional, organizational, social, and economic factors influencing efforts to improve MSME competitiveness.

3. Results and discussion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the MSME Empowerment Program at the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency has been relatively well implemented, although several structural and operational challenges remain that affect the optimization of business competitiveness improvement. The implemented programs include entrepreneurship training, business mentoring, business legality facilitation, access to financing support, marketing

development, and MSME institutional strengthening. The findings indicate that successful implementation is not solely determined by the existence of programs but also by the ability of implementing organizations to translate policies into activities that are aligned with the needs of MSME actors.

The [Meter & Horn \(1975\)](#), implementation model was employed as the analytical framework because it explains that policy implementation is a complex process influenced by six main variables: policy standards and objectives, resources, characteristics of implementing organizations, inter-organizational communication, implementers' disposition, and the social, economic, and political environment. This model positions implementation not merely as an administrative activity but as an interaction process between policies, implementing organizations, target groups, and the policy environment ([Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975](#)).

Table 1.
 Dimensions of MSME Empowerment Program Implementation Based
 on Van Meter and Van Horn Model

Implementation Dimension	Research Findings	Analysis
Policy standards and objectives	The program has objectives to improve MSME capacity and competitiveness	Objectives are clear but require segmentation based on business profiles
Resources	Limited personnel, mentors, budget, and MSME database	Becomes a barrier to implementation effectiveness
Characteristics of implementing organizations	Organizational structure and institutional duties support implementation	Organizational capacity still requires strengthening
Inter-organizational communication	Coordination with cooperatives, banking institutions, and business actors is conducted	Communication needs to be intensified and more needs-based
Implementers' disposition	Government officials demonstrate commitment to the program	Becomes a supporting factor for implementation success
Social, economic, and political environment	MSME conditions vary and access between regions remains unequal	Requires strategies based on regional characteristics

Source: Processed based on research findings and the Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) implementation theory analysis.

The research findings indicate that the MSME Empowerment Program in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency has established relatively clear policy standards and objectives. The local government, through the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs, has determined the direction of the program to improve micro-enterprise capacity through training, business legality facilitation, institutional strengthening, partnerships, financing access, and marketing development. Interview findings reveal that most informants understand the primary objective of the program, which is to improve the capacity of MSME actors so that they can grow and compete. However, the study also found that program implementation still tends to apply a general approach, while MSMEs have diverse characteristics based on business sectors, business scale, managerial capacity, and digital readiness.

This condition indicates that although policy standards have been established, the translation of objectives requires a more segmented approach. This finding is consistent with [Wulandari & Nugroho](#)

(2022), who argue that MSME empowerment strategies should consider business profiles, human resource capacity, internal business conditions, technology adoption, financing access, and market opportunities. Uniform programs may generate different impacts because each MSME group has different needs and intervention requirements. Therefore, program implementation should be directed toward a business classification-based approach, such as beginner MSMEs, developing MSMEs, and expansion-ready MSMEs. This approach enables the government to provide more appropriate interventions according to different stages of business development.

Resources represent one of the most decisive factors influencing the success of program implementation. The findings show that the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency has received budgetary and institutional support but still faces limitations in terms of the number and capacity of human resources. The limited number of business mentors has resulted in insufficient intensive assistance for all MSME actors. Furthermore, post-training monitoring remains suboptimal, making it difficult for the government to fully assess the extent to which acquired knowledge and skills are applied in business activities. These findings support Edward III (1980), argument that limited resources may prevent policies from achieving their objectives even when policy designs are well formulated. Resources in policy implementation include not only financial support but also human resource competence, information availability, facilities, and technical assistance. In this research context, resource limitations affect several aspects, including incomplete MSME data collection, limited mentoring intensity, and inadequate outcome-based evaluation. Therefore, strengthening organizational capacity through improving personnel competence, developing MSME databases, and establishing external collaborations is required.

The characteristics of implementing organizations indicate that the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency possesses an organizational structure that supports program implementation. The institution has authority in technical policy formulation, guidance, empowerment, coordination, supervision, and evaluation of MSME programs. However, the study found that organizational capacity still faces several obstacles, particularly related to personnel limitations and workload distribution. These conditions influence the organization's ability to reach all MSME actors, especially those located in areas with limited access to economic institutions. This situation can be observed from the unequal distribution of economic institutions in the region. The largest concentration of cooperatives is located in Baturaja Timur District, while several other districts have significantly fewer cooperatives. Such inequality may affect MSME actors' access to information, financing opportunities, and business mentoring.

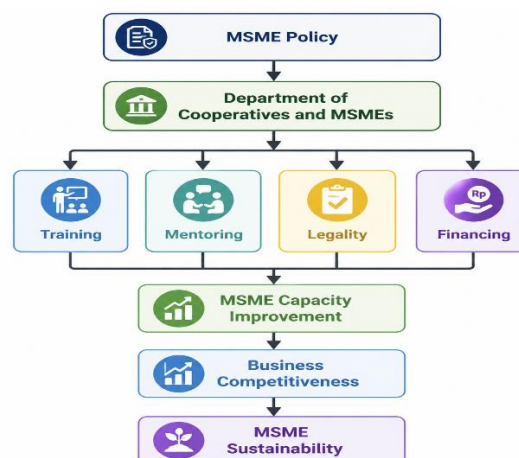


Figure 2. MSME Empowerment Program Implementation Model in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency
 Source: Developed based on research findings.

Inter-organizational communication represents an important supporting factor in program implementation. The study shows that coordination between the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs, cooperatives, banking institutions, and MSME actors has been relatively well established. Collaboration with banking institutions primarily supports financing access for MSME actors. Furthermore, communication through MSME forums and socialization activities serves as a mechanism for disseminating program information. However, several MSME actors stated that information regarding program activities is sometimes received shortly before implementation. This condition limits some business actors' ability to prepare adequately for participation. The effective inter-organizational communication is essential to ensure that policy objectives are understood consistently by all implementation actors. Inconsistent communication may create differences in interpretation between policy implementers and target groups. The findings indicate that implementers' disposition or attitude represents one of the main supporting factors in program implementation. Officials at the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs demonstrate commitment to implementing empowerment programs through various mentoring and facilitation activities. This commitment is reflected in government officials' efforts to assist MSME actors in obtaining business legality, participating in training programs, and accessing financing opportunities. Positive implementer attitudes are important because policy implementation highly depends on how government officials understand and accept policy objectives.

This finding supports [Meter & Horn \(1975\)](#), who explain that implementers' disposition determines implementation success because officials with strong understanding and commitment are more capable of executing policies according to their intended objectives. The external environment significantly influences MSME empowerment program implementation. The socio-economic conditions of MSME actors in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency demonstrate considerable variation. Some MSMEs have successfully developed, while others continue to experience obstacles related to capital limitations, technology adoption, product quality, and marketing. Changes in the business environment due to digital technology development also create new challenges. Some MSME actors have not yet been able to utilize digital platforms as instruments for marketing and business development. These findings are consistent with [Suhermanto & Setiawan \(2021\)](#), who found that MSME empowerment implementation can be improved through training and mentoring; however, its effectiveness remains influenced by resource limitations and MSME actors' adaptive capabilities.

Based on the findings, the implementation of the MSME Empowerment Program in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency has contributed to improving community business capacity but still requires strengthening in monitoring mechanisms, digital transformation, program segmentation, and continuous mentoring. The main contribution of this research is the understanding that MSME empowerment success cannot be achieved merely through program availability but must be developed through approaches based on business needs and characteristics. Therefore, strengthening implementation strategies should be directed toward developing a Business Profile-Based Empowerment Model that integrates business classification, continuous mentoring, MSME digital ecosystems, pentahelix collaboration, and outcome-based monitoring. Through this approach, MSME empowerment programs will not only produce administrative achievements, such as the number of training activities or participants, but also generate tangible improvements in productivity, innovation, market expansion, and business sustainability.

The research findings indicate that the success of MSME Empowerment Program implementation is not only influenced by the existence of government policies and programs but also by the ability of local governments to establish empowerment mechanisms oriented toward strengthening business capacity. The empowerment programs implemented through training, business legality facilitation, mentoring, and financing access have contributed to improving the capabilities of some MSME actors. However, the study also found that the impact of these programs has not been evenly distributed due to differences in business characteristics, levels of business readiness, and the ability of MSME actors to adapt to changes in the business environment. This condition demonstrates that MSME policy

implementation requires a more adaptive approach that considers the heterogeneity of business actors rather than relying solely on administrative program targets. A general empowerment approach tends to generate different levels of benefits because each MSME has distinct needs, capacities, and challenges. Therefore, local governments need to develop business-segmentation-based empowerment strategies to ensure that interventions are more targeted and capable of generating sustainable improvements in business capacity (Verma et al., 2024).

From the perspective of public policy implementation, the findings of this study demonstrate that the relationship between policy design and implementation outcomes is strongly influenced by the capacity of implementing organizations. The Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency has established institutional authority and organizational structures to implement MSME empowerment programs; however, limitations in the number of personnel, mentoring intensity, and outcome-based evaluation systems remain major challenges. These conditions indicate that policy success does not solely depend on clearly formulated objectives but also requires bureaucratic capacity to provide adequate resources, establish effective coordination mechanisms, and conduct continuous monitoring and evaluation. Local government institutions, as policy implementers, play a strategic role in ensuring that designed programs are able to address the needs of target communities. Limited institutional capacity may cause programs to operate merely at an administrative level without producing substantial improvements in MSME competitiveness. Previous research has demonstrated that local government institutional capacity is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of community economic empowerment programs, particularly in relation to coordination, mentoring, and program sustainability (Redman, 2018).

In addition to internal organizational factors, this study also identifies digitalization as an important factor influencing MSME competitiveness. Some MSME actors still experience limitations in utilizing digital technologies for marketing, business management, and expanding market access. Meanwhile, digital transformation has become an essential requirement in responding to changing consumer behavior and increasing business competition. MSME empowerment programs should therefore not only focus on improving production capabilities but also strengthen digital literacy, encourage the utilization of e-commerce platforms, and develop technology-based marketing strategies. Strengthening the digital ecosystem for MSMEs can enhance business capabilities in expanding markets, improving operational efficiency, and building stronger relationships with consumers. Studies on MSME development in the digital era indicate that technological adaptation capability is one of the main determinants of sustainability and competitiveness among small and medium-sized enterprises (Handayani & Masrokhah, 2024).

Based on these findings, the implementation of the MSME Empowerment Program in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency needs to be directed toward a more collaborative and outcome-oriented empowerment model. Local governments cannot work independently but require the involvement of various stakeholders, including financial institutions, universities, business sectors, MSME communities, and society. A collaborative approach enables resource sharing, improves access to information, and strengthens the capacity of business actors more comprehensively (Wulandari et al., 2026). Therefore, the success of program implementation should not only be measured by the number of activities conducted but also by the tangible changes achieved in business capabilities, productivity improvement, market expansion, and MSME sustainability. Collaborative approaches in local economic development have been proven to strengthen public policy effectiveness by involving multiple actors with different resources and competencies to achieve shared objectives.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of the MSME Empowerment Program by the Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs of Ogan Komering Ulu Regency has contributed to strengthening MSME capacity and improving business competitiveness, although its effectiveness remains constrained by several implementation challenges. The policy implementation model, the findings indicate that program performance is shaped by the interaction of policy standards and objectives, resources, organizational characteristics, inter-organizational communication, implementers' disposition, and the social, economic, and political environment. While the program has established clear objectives through business training, legality facilitation, mentoring, financing support, and institutional strengthening, its implementation is still hindered by limited human resources, uneven mentoring services, incomplete MSME databases, and the absence of comprehensive outcome-based evaluation mechanisms.

The findings extend the policy implementation literature by demonstrating that MSME empowerment is not merely an administrative process but a dynamic interaction among institutional capacity, stakeholder collaboration, and the adaptive capabilities of MSME actors. The study further emphasizes that improving MSME competitiveness requires empowerment strategies that are tailored to business characteristics, regional economic potential, digital transformation, and continuous capacity development. Accordingly, the proposed Business Profile-Based Empowerment Model offers a practical framework for aligning government interventions with the specific needs and development stages of MSMEs.

From a policy perspective, the study highlights the importance of strengthening organizational capacity, developing integrated MSME databases, improving evidence-based planning, expanding pentahelix collaboration, enhancing digital capabilities, and implementing outcome-oriented monitoring and evaluation systems. These measures are expected to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of MSME empowerment programs. Future research should examine the long-term impacts of empowerment policies through longitudinal and comparative studies, as well as develop quantitative models to assess the relationships among empowerment interventions, digital adoption, innovation capacity, and MSME competitiveness across different regional contexts.

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