

Participatory Arts and Community Empowerment in Urban and Rural Indonesia: A Comparative Secondary-Data Study

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ABSTRACT: Participatory arts have emerged as an effective approach to fostering community empowerment through inclusive participation, collaborative governance, and cultural sustainability. However, comparative evidence on how participatory arts operate across urban and rural contexts in Indonesia remains limited. This study compares the characteristics, empowerment processes, and contextual mechanisms of participatory arts programs in urban and rural Indonesia using a comparative secondary-data approach. A qualitative evidence synthesis was conducted using secondary data published between 2015 and 2025, collected from international and national academic databases, government publications, and institutional reports. Eligible studies were selected through predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and analyzed using structured focused comparison. The analysis was guided by Empowerment Theory, Social Capital Theory, Cultural Democracy, Creative Placemaking, and Community Resilience. The findings indicate that participatory arts strengthen multidimensional community empowerment in both urban and rural settings, although the pathways differ according to contextual conditions. Urban programs benefit from stronger institutional support, diversified funding, and cross-sector partnerships, while rural initiatives demonstrate stronger community ownership, cultural sovereignty, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and heritage-based development. Across both contexts, programs characterized by co-creation, shared decision-making, and community ownership consistently produce stronger empowerment outcomes than those involving limited participation. Governance quality, institutional capacity, cultural assets, and resource availability are identified as more influential determinants of empowerment than geographical location. This study concludes that participatory arts constitute an effective governance strategy for sustainable community empowerment in Indonesia. It proposes an integrated comparative framework linking participation, governance, social capital, cultural rights, and community resilience to support future research and evidence-based cultural policy.

Keywords: Participatory Arts, Community Empowerment, Urban Communities, Rural Communities, Comparative Secondary-Data Study, Cultural Governance, Indonesia



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INTRODUCTION

Participatory arts have increasingly emerged as an influential approach within community development, reflecting a broader shift from viewing artistic activities solely as cultural products toward recognizing them as collaborative social processes that facilitate participation, dialogue,

and collective action. Rather than positioning community members as passive audiences, participatory arts emphasize their active involvement throughout the creative process, including idea generation, planning, implementation, evaluation, and governance. This transformation aligns with contemporary perspectives on democratic governance and place-based development, where local communities are regarded as key actors in shaping social, cultural, and spatial change. Recent scholarship consistently conceptualizes participatory arts as co-creative practices that foster social learning, encourage shared ownership of outcomes, and strengthen relationships among citizens, artists, governments, and other stakeholders (Chinapaw et al., 2024; Clavin et al., 2021; Martins, 2021; Phillips et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2022). Consequently, the significance of participatory arts extends beyond artistic production itself, encompassing the creation of inclusive decision-making processes that enable communities to articulate local aspirations, negotiate development priorities, and participate actively in shaping their own futures. Within this perspective, artistic practice becomes both a cultural expression and a governance mechanism capable of supporting more equitable and participatory models of community development.

The growing importance of participatory arts is particularly evident in rapidly changing urban and rural environments, where communities are confronted with complex social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges. In many contexts, arts-based initiatives have become valuable instruments for strengthening local identity, improving social cohesion, facilitating knowledge exchange, and promoting collaborative responses to community issues. Studies on arts-based planning, participatory design, photovoice, participatory video, living laboratories, and community-led placemaking demonstrate that creative practices can effectively translate lived experiences into actionable knowledge for planning and policymaking (Carpenter, 2022; Jiang et al., 2020; McBee, 2023). At the same time, participatory arts have become increasingly integrated into interdisciplinary approaches that combine scientific knowledge, cultural practice, and community expertise through iterative processes of co-creation and mutual learning (Calzada, 2023; Clavin et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2022). This evolution reflects a broader understanding that sustainable community development depends not only on technical interventions or economic investment but also on the capacity of communities to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their cultural environments and everyday lives. Consequently, participatory arts are now widely regarded as an important component of inclusive development strategies, capable of strengthening both democratic participation and long-term community empowerment across diverse geographical and cultural settings.

Despite the growing recognition of participatory arts in community development, empirical evidence remains fragmented across disciplines, geographical contexts, and methodological traditions. Existing studies have predominantly examined individual projects or specific artistic interventions, often emphasizing descriptive accounts of successful community engagement without systematically comparing how different contextual conditions influence empowerment outcomes. In particular, comparisons between urban and rural settings remain limited, even though these environments differ substantially in terms of governance arrangements, institutional capacity, cultural resources, infrastructure, funding opportunities, and demographic characteristics. Urban participatory arts initiatives frequently operate within complex governance systems involving municipalities, universities, cultural organizations, and private partners, whereas rural

and Indigenous initiatives are more commonly rooted in community-led institutions, local traditions, and place-based cultural practices (Iaione et al., 2022; Khoiriah et al., 2022; Klingmann, 2022). These contextual differences suggest that participatory arts may generate distinct pathways of empowerment depending on the social, cultural, and institutional environments in which they are implemented. However, because previous studies generally investigate these contexts independently, the field still lacks a coherent comparative understanding of how participatory arts function across diverse community settings.

Another important limitation concerns the conceptualization and measurement of community empowerment itself. Although empowerment is frequently identified as a principal objective of participatory arts, the concept is operationalized inconsistently across the literature. Some studies focus primarily on individual outcomes such as confidence, creativity, or skill development, whereas others emphasize collective capacities including social cohesion, community identity, civic participation, organizational development, or resilience. Similarly, participatory arts have been interpreted through multiple theoretical perspectives, including Empowerment Theory, Social Capital Theory, Cultural Democracy, Creative Placemaking, and Community Resilience, each highlighting different mechanisms through which artistic participation contributes to community development (Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; Heard et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). While these perspectives collectively demonstrate that participatory arts can strengthen voice, agency, trust, cultural identity, and collaborative governance, the absence of standardized analytical frameworks has made it difficult to compare findings across studies or translate accumulated evidence into policy recommendations. Addressing this methodological fragmentation requires a comparative approach that synthesizes evidence using common indicators of participation, empowerment, and contextual characteristics, thereby enabling more rigorous interpretation of similarities, differences, and transferable lessons across urban and rural Indonesia.

The existing body of literature has proposed several approaches to strengthening community empowerment through participatory arts, with particular emphasis on collaborative governance, co-creation, and community-centered decision-making. Across diverse geographical settings, participatory arts are consistently presented as mechanisms that enable communities to move beyond passive participation toward active engagement in identifying local problems, designing interventions, implementing creative activities, and evaluating collective outcomes. Such approaches are grounded in the principles of Empowerment Theory, which conceptualizes empowerment as a dynamic process through which individuals and communities gain greater control over decisions affecting their lives, while simultaneously developing the knowledge, skills, and organizational capacities required for sustained collective action (Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; Clavin et al., 2021; Martins, 2021; Chinapaw et al., 2024). Closely related perspectives, including Social Capital Theory, further explain how participatory arts strengthen bonding, bridging, and linking relationships by fostering trust, reciprocity, cooperation, and shared responsibility among community members and external stakeholders (Wood et al., 2022; Heard et al., 2023). Likewise, Cultural Democracy emphasizes that communities should possess not only the right to access cultural activities but also the authority to define cultural narratives, shape artistic expression, and govern cultural resources collectively. These theoretical perspectives collectively suggest that

meaningful participation is achieved when communities become co-creators and co-governors rather than beneficiaries of externally designed programs.

Beyond community participation itself, recent scholarship increasingly highlights the importance of integrating participatory arts into broader place-based and resilience-oriented development strategies. Creative Placemaking demonstrates how collaborative artistic practices can revitalize public spaces, reinforce local identity, stimulate creative economies, and strengthen social interaction through the co-production of meaningful places (Clavin et al., 2021; Heard et al., 2023). Complementing this perspective, studies employing living laboratories, participatory planning, photovoice, participatory video, and design-driven social innovation illustrate how iterative collaboration among residents, researchers, artists, planners, and public institutions can generate locally appropriate solutions while promoting adaptive learning and institutional innovation (Jiang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Calzada, 2023). In rural and Indigenous contexts, participatory arts have similarly been associated with cultural revitalization, intergenerational knowledge transfer, community-based tourism, and the protection of cultural sovereignty through locally controlled creative practices (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020; Nagy, 2023; Sokoy, 2022). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that participatory arts can contribute to sustainable community development through multiple pathways. Nevertheless, they also reveal that the effectiveness of these approaches depends on contextual factors such as governance arrangements, institutional capacity, funding mechanisms, local cultural assets, and the extent to which communities retain genuine authority over decision-making processes.

Although the literature consistently demonstrates the potential of participatory arts to foster community empowerment, several important research gaps remain unresolved. First, comparative evidence examining empowerment processes across urban and rural contexts is still limited, with most studies concentrating on single cases or localized interventions rather than systematically synthesizing findings across multiple settings (Phillips et al., 2020; Heard et al., 2023; McBee, 2023). Second, methodological diversity including the use of photovoice, participatory video, participatory action research, living laboratories, and community-based design has generated rich qualitative insights but has also resulted in inconsistent reporting standards and measurement approaches, making cross-study comparison difficult (Wood et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023). Third, while empowerment is frequently claimed as an outcome, relatively few studies explicitly evaluate how different participation levels influence multidimensional empowerment, particularly across individual, social, cultural, civic, economic, organizational, spatial, and digital domains. Moreover, questions concerning long-term sustainability, institutional embedding, resilience, and the distribution of power within participatory processes remain insufficiently explored. Scholars have also highlighted the need to examine risks such as selective empowerment, elite capture, cultural appropriation, and the instrumentalization of participatory arts within broader development agendas (Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; McBee, 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Collectively, these gaps indicate the need for a systematic comparative synthesis capable of integrating evidence from diverse studies through a common analytical framework.

Responding to these limitations, the present study conducts a comparative secondary-data analysis of participatory arts programs implemented in urban and rural Indonesia. Rather than evaluating

individual projects in isolation, this study synthesizes empirical evidence using standardized indicators of participation, community empowerment, social capital, and program sustainability. The analysis is informed by an integrated theoretical framework that combines Empowerment Theory, Social Capital Theory, Cultural Democracy, Creative Placemaking, and Community Resilience to explain how contextual conditions influence empowerment pathways. The study advances five comparative propositions concerning institutional support, cultural identity, participation intensity, social capital formation, and program sustainability, which are examined through structured cross-case synthesis rather than statistical hypothesis testing. The principal contribution of this research lies in developing a multidimensional comparative framework that enables consistent evaluation of participatory arts across different geographical contexts while providing evidence-based insights for cultural policy and community development in Indonesia. The scope of the study is limited to participatory arts initiatives published between 2015 and 2025 that involve substantive community participation defined as contribution, co-creation, co-decision, or community ownership and report measurable empowerment processes or outcomes. By integrating fragmented evidence into a coherent comparative model, this study seeks to strengthen both the theoretical understanding and practical application of participatory arts as a strategy for sustainable community empowerment.

METHOD

This study employed a comparative secondary-data research design using qualitative evidence synthesis to examine how participatory arts contribute to community empowerment in urban and rural Indonesia. The selection of a secondary-data approach was motivated by the fragmented nature of existing participatory arts research, where empirical evidence is dispersed across journal articles, theses, evaluation reports, and government publications. Rather than generating new primary data, the study systematically synthesized existing evidence to identify common patterns, contextual differences, and transferable mechanisms of empowerment across multiple community settings. Such an approach enables broader theoretical interpretation than individual case studies while providing a more comprehensive understanding of participatory arts practices within diverse socio-cultural environments.

Methodologically, the research adopted a structured focused comparison combined with qualitative evidence synthesis (QES). Structured focused comparison allows multiple cases to be examined using a consistent set of analytical questions and standardized indicators, thereby enhancing comparability across heterogeneous studies. The qualitative evidence synthesis was selected because participatory arts research frequently employs qualitative methodologies, including case studies, participatory action research, community-based participatory research (CBPR), ethnography, photovoice, participatory video, and arts-based inquiry. Synthesizing these diverse forms of evidence requires interpretive approaches capable of generating higher-order conceptual understanding rather than simply aggregating findings. Previous research has demonstrated that qualitative evidence synthesis, particularly meta-synthesis and meta-ethnography, is effective for translating concepts across studies and identifying mechanisms

through which participatory arts influence community empowerment (Groot et al., 2020; Perkins et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2023). Unlike conventional narrative reviews, these approaches facilitate the development of new theoretical insights by integrating findings from multiple contexts while preserving the complexity of qualitative evidence.

The methodological framework also draws upon principles from systematic reviews, rapid evidence syntheses, integrative reviews, and community-based participatory research. Rapid review methodologies have proven valuable for synthesizing evidence on the social value of place-based arts interventions and informing policy development in complex urban and rural contexts (Ganga et al., 2024). Similarly, integrative and scoping reviews have been widely used to examine arts-based interventions across diverse populations, enabling researchers to identify mechanisms of action, equity considerations, and participatory processes while accommodating methodological diversity (Bowyer et al., 2024; Irons et al., 2020; Sanchez et al., 2023). Community-based participatory research principles further informed the methodological orientation of this study by emphasizing co-production of knowledge, respect for local perspectives, and the recognition that empowerment should be interpreted within the social and cultural contexts in which participatory arts programs are implemented (Bazooband et al., 2021).

To ensure methodological transparency and reproducibility, the study followed internationally recognized reporting principles for qualitative evidence synthesis. The overall review process was informed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) for documenting study identification and selection, while reporting of qualitative synthesis was guided by the Enhancing Transparency in Reporting the Synthesis of Qualitative Research (ENTREQ) and the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR). Together, these frameworks improve transparency in study selection, data extraction, synthesis, and interpretation, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of comparative secondary-data research in participatory arts (Keiller et al., 2023).

Literature Search Strategy and Study Selection

A systematic literature search was undertaken to identify empirical studies examining participatory arts and community empowerment in urban and rural contexts. The search strategy was designed to maximize both comprehensiveness and transparency by following internationally recognized principles for systematic evidence synthesis. Consistent with PRISMA recommendations, the review process consisted of four sequential stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. This structured approach ensured that study selection was systematic, reproducible, and explicitly documented throughout the review process (Keiller et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2023).

Electronic searches were conducted across multiple international and national databases to capture both global and Indonesian scholarship. International databases included Scopus, Web of Science, Dimensions, ProQuest, and Google Scholar, while Indonesian publications were identified through GARUDA, institutional repositories, government publications, and reports produced by

non-governmental organizations. Because participatory arts research frequently appears outside conventional journal literature, grey literature including master's theses, doctoral dissertations, policy reports, evaluation reports, and official cultural publications was also considered to reduce publication bias and capture practice-based evidence. This broader search strategy reflects recommendations from integrative reviews and qualitative evidence syntheses, which emphasize the importance of incorporating diverse evidence sources when investigating complex community-based interventions (Irons et al., 2020; Sanchez et al., 2023; Ganga et al., 2024).

Search terms were developed from the study objectives and refined through preliminary scoping exercises. Boolean operators were employed to combine key concepts related to participatory arts, community empowerment, and geographical context. Representative search expressions included combinations such as ("participatory arts" OR "community arts" OR "socially engaged art") AND ("community empowerment" OR empowerment) AND Indonesia, together with context-specific combinations involving urban, rural, village, indigenous community, creative placemaking, social capital, and community resilience. Additional manual searches of reference lists were conducted to identify influential studies that were not retrieved through database searches.

The review was restricted to studies published between 2015 and 2025. This time frame was selected because participatory arts has experienced substantial methodological and theoretical development during the past decade, particularly through the growing integration of community-based participatory research, co-design, participatory governance, creative placemaking, and resilience-oriented development. Furthermore, limiting the review to recent publications ensured that the synthesis reflected contemporary conceptualizations of empowerment and current policy discussions relevant to Indonesia.

Eligibility Criteria

To ensure analytical consistency, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established before the review commenced. Studies were included when they: (1) were published between 2015 and 2025; (2) investigated participatory arts or closely related community-based artistic practices; (3) involved substantive community participation corresponding to contribution, co-creation, co-decision, or community ownership rather than passive attendance; (4) were conducted within clearly identifiable urban or rural contexts; (5) reported community empowerment processes or outcomes; and (6) provided sufficient methodological detail to permit critical appraisal. Eligible publication types included peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, government reports, and NGO evaluation reports.

Studies were excluded if communities functioned solely as audiences, if artistic activities consisted only of one-way performances without participatory engagement, if empowerment outcomes were absent or insufficiently described, if geographical context could not be classified as urban or rural, or if methodological procedures were inadequately reported. Promotional documents, opinion pieces, and duplicate publications describing the same project were also excluded. Establishing

these criteria before screening reduced selection bias and enhanced the consistency of evidence synthesis.

Following the initial search, all retrieved records underwent title and abstract screening before full-text assessment. Duplicate publications were removed, and potentially relevant studies were independently evaluated against the predefined eligibility criteria. Reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage were documented to ensure transparency and facilitate replication of the review process. The final corpus of included studies formed the evidence base for subsequent data extraction, quality appraisal, and comparative synthesis.

Data Extraction, Quality Appraisal, and Data Analysis

Following the identification of eligible studies, a standardized data extraction procedure was implemented to ensure consistency and comparability across the selected literature. A structured evidence matrix was developed prior to extraction to minimize interpretive bias and to facilitate systematic comparison between urban and rural participatory arts programs. The evidence matrix captured three broad categories of information: (1) study characteristics, including author, publication year, geographical location, research design, and methodological approach; (2) program characteristics, including community type, art form, participant group, duration, funding source, participation level, and governance arrangements; and (3) community empowerment outcomes, including individual, social, cultural, civic, economic, organizational, spatial, and digital dimensions of empowerment. Additional information regarding implementation challenges, sustainability, and contextual factors was also extracted to support cross-case interpretation.

Because qualitative evidence often employs diverse terminology and conceptual frameworks, the extraction process emphasized conceptual equivalence rather than identical wording. For example, terms such as community ownership, shared governance, co-management, and collective decision-making were interpreted as related expressions of participatory governance when supported by the original study context. Similarly, indicators describing trust, cooperation, mutual support, and collective efficacy were synthesized under broader dimensions of social capital where conceptually appropriate. This interpretive approach is consistent with qualitative evidence synthesis and meta-ethnography, which seek to translate concepts across studies while preserving their contextual meaning rather than reducing findings to simple descriptive summaries (Perkins et al., 2020; Groot et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2023).

To enhance the methodological credibility of the synthesis, all included studies underwent a formal quality appraisal before being incorporated into the comparative analysis. Given that the review incorporated predominantly qualitative evidence together with a smaller number of mixed-methods studies, the appraisal strategy combined internationally recognized instruments appropriate for each research design. Qualitative studies were primarily assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist, which evaluates research aims, methodological appropriateness, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, researcher reflexivity, ethical considerations, analytical rigor, clarity of findings, and overall research value (Butcher et al., 2023;

Irons et al., 2020; Young & Clerke, 2024). Where studies adopted mixed-methods approaches or contained substantial qualitative components alongside quantitative evidence, appraisal criteria from the Joanna Briggs Institute Qualitative Assessment and Review Instrument (JBI-QARI) were also applied to evaluate methodological coherence, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Irons et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2023; Sanchez et al., 2023).

Rather than excluding studies solely because of methodological limitations, appraisal outcomes were incorporated into the synthesis as indicators of evidential strength. Each study was therefore classified as high, moderate, or low quality according to its overall methodological rigor and reporting transparency. This approach acknowledges that community-based participatory arts research frequently employs flexible and context-sensitive methodologies that may not satisfy every conventional quality criterion while still offering valuable insights into empowerment processes. Consequently, quality assessment was used to inform interpretation rather than to eliminate potentially informative evidence.

The comparative analysis followed a multistage qualitative synthesis procedure. Initially, descriptive analysis was undertaken to summarize the characteristics of the included studies and identify patterns in geographical distribution, artistic forms, participant groups, and participation levels. Subsequently, an open coding process was conducted to identify recurring concepts related to empowerment, participation, governance, and contextual influences. Codes with conceptual similarity were then integrated through axial coding, enabling the development of broader analytical categories such as individual agency, social cohesion, cultural identity, civic participation, institutional capacity, spatial transformation, and program sustainability. Finally, these themes were examined through cross-case synthesis, whereby urban and rural cases were systematically compared using identical analytical dimensions and interpreted through the integrated theoretical framework comprising Empowerment Theory, Social Capital Theory, Cultural Democracy, Creative Placemaking, and Community Resilience.

The analytical strategy therefore combined the interpretive strengths of qualitative evidence synthesis with the systematic logic of structured focused comparison. Rather than seeking statistical generalization, the analysis aimed to identify recurring mechanisms, contextual variations, and explanatory patterns that could enhance theoretical understanding of participatory arts and inform evidence-based cultural policy. Such an approach has been recommended in recent comparative syntheses of participatory arts because it enables researchers to accommodate methodological heterogeneity while producing transferable conceptual insights that extend beyond individual case studies (Grabowski et al., 2024; Mansfield et al., 2024).

Trustworthiness, Ethical Considerations, and Methodological Limitations

Ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative evidence synthesis requires systematic procedures that enhance credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability throughout the review process. In the present study, credibility was strengthened through comprehensive literature searching, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, standardized data extraction, and the

application of explicit quality appraisal procedures. Rather than relying on isolated findings from individual studies, the synthesis emphasized convergence across multiple sources, allowing recurring themes and explanatory mechanisms to emerge from diverse contexts. This process of triangulating evidence from peer-reviewed articles, theses, evaluation reports, government publications, and grey literature increased confidence in the robustness of the resulting interpretations. Such triangulation has been widely recommended in qualitative evidence synthesis and community-based participatory research because it accommodates methodological diversity while reducing the influence of individual study bias (Williams et al., 2023; Sanchez et al., 2023; Bazooband et al., 2021).

Dependability was supported through the use of a structured evidence matrix and a transparent analytical protocol that documented each stage of the review process, from literature identification to thematic interpretation. Reporting procedures were informed by PRISMA for study selection and by ENTREQ and SRQR for qualitative evidence synthesis, thereby ensuring that methodological decisions, inclusion criteria, coding procedures, and synthesis strategies were explicitly described and reproducible (Keiller et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2023). Confirmability was further enhanced by grounding all analytical interpretations in evidence extracted directly from the included studies and by interpreting findings through established theoretical perspectives rather than subjective assumptions. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of contextual characteristics, including geographical setting, community type, participation level, governance arrangements, and empowerment outcomes, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of findings to other participatory arts initiatives and community development contexts.

Ethical considerations in this research differ from those associated with primary empirical studies because no human participants were directly involved in data collection. Consequently, formal ethical approval was not required. Nevertheless, the study adhered to established principles of research integrity throughout the review process. All included studies were accurately cited, interpreted within their original context, and represented without alteration of meaning. Particular attention was paid to preserving the voices of communities represented in the original publications while avoiding decontextualization or selective interpretation. Because participatory arts frequently involve marginalized, Indigenous, or historically underrepresented communities, the synthesis was also informed by the ethical principles underlying community-based participatory research, including respect for community knowledge, recognition of shared authorship of cultural practices, and sensitivity to issues of power, representation, and cultural ownership (Williams et al., 2023; Bazooband et al., 2021). These considerations are particularly important when synthesizing evidence across diverse social and cultural contexts, where differences in governance structures, local traditions, and community priorities influence both participation processes and empowerment outcomes.

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. First, as a secondary-data study, the findings depend upon the quality, scope, and reporting standards of the original studies. Variations in research design, terminology, and outcome measurement limited direct comparison across cases and required interpretive synthesis rather than quantitative aggregation. Second, participatory arts

programs are inherently context-dependent, and therefore empowerment mechanisms identified in one setting may not be fully transferable to another without considering local institutional, cultural, and socio-economic conditions. Third, although extensive efforts were made to include grey literature and non-indexed publications, some relevant community-based projects may remain undocumented or inaccessible through academic databases. Finally, publication bias may have resulted in greater representation of successful or well-funded programs, while unsuccessful or discontinued initiatives were less frequently reported.

Despite these limitations, the methodological design provides a rigorous framework for comparative analysis by combining systematic review procedures, qualitative evidence synthesis, structured focused comparison, and multidimensional empowerment analysis. The integration of internationally recognized reporting standards, validated quality appraisal tools, and an explicit analytical framework enhances the transparency and credibility of the study. Furthermore, the adoption of standardized empowerment indicators and evidence extraction procedures contributes to greater consistency across heterogeneous studies, thereby strengthening the capacity of participatory arts research to generate cumulative knowledge and inform evidence-based cultural policy.

Overall, the methodology developed in this study establishes a transparent and replicable process for synthesizing diverse forms of evidence concerning participatory arts and community empowerment. By integrating systematic literature review principles, qualitative evidence synthesis, comparative case analysis, and theoretically informed interpretation, the methodological framework provides a robust foundation for examining how participatory arts contribute to community empowerment across urban and rural Indonesia. The subsequent chapter presents the findings of this comparative synthesis, highlighting recurring patterns, contextual differences, and mechanisms through which participatory arts influence multidimensional empowerment outcomes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Urban Participatory Arts Programs

The synthesized literature indicates that participatory arts programs implemented in urban contexts are characterized by diverse artistic forms, multi-actor governance arrangements, and relatively high levels of institutional involvement. Across the reviewed studies, participatory arts extend beyond conventional artistic production to include community-led placemaking, participatory design, public art, photovoice, participatory video, creative mapping, neighborhood festivals, and arts-based urban regeneration initiatives. These activities are frequently integrated into broader urban planning and community development strategies, where artistic practice serves simultaneously as a cultural intervention and a mechanism for collaborative governance. Rather than functioning solely as aesthetic activities, urban participatory arts are consistently presented as instruments for strengthening community dialogue, improving neighborhood identity, and facilitating collaboration among multiple stakeholders (Clavin et al., 2021; Carpenter, 2022; Wood et al., 2022).

A distinctive characteristic of urban participatory arts programs is the diversity of stakeholders involved throughout project implementation. The reviewed studies consistently describe collaborative governance structures involving local residents, community organizations, artists, cultural institutions, municipal governments, universities, urban planners, private-sector partners, and civil society organizations. Such multi-actor arrangements create opportunities for combining technical expertise, public resources, community knowledge, and artistic innovation within a single participatory framework. Evidence from European and Asian urban regeneration projects demonstrates that these partnerships enhance institutional capacity and facilitate the integration of community perspectives into formal planning processes, although the complexity of governance arrangements also requires effective coordination and transparent decision-making mechanisms (Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; Iaione et al., 2022; Punziano, 2022).

The reviewed literature further demonstrates considerable variation in the depth of community participation within urban arts initiatives. While many projects claim to be participatory, actual levels of participation range from consultation and involvement to co-design, co-production, co-management, and shared governance. Programs employing collaborative planning approaches generally position residents as active contributors to project design, implementation, and evaluation. However, several studies caution that participation does not necessarily guarantee genuine empowerment. Urban place-branding and neighborhood regeneration projects, for example, sometimes exhibit selective empowerment in which participation is formally encouraged but decision-making authority remains concentrated among institutional actors. Such circumstances create risks of co-option, symbolic participation, and elite capture, emphasizing the importance of governance safeguards that ensure meaningful community influence over project objectives and outcomes (Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; Clavin et al., 2021).

Despite these challenges, urban participatory arts programs consistently report positive empowerment outcomes across multiple dimensions. Individual empowerment is reflected in increased confidence, creative skills, leadership capacity, and opportunities for civic engagement among participants. At the community level, programs frequently strengthen social networks, foster trust, and expand opportunities for collaboration between residents and public institutions. Many initiatives also contribute to neighborhood revitalization through arts-led placemaking, generating stronger place identity, improved public spaces, and greater visibility for marginalized communities. Design-driven interventions employing photovoice, participatory mapping, and community storytelling further enable residents to articulate local priorities and participate in policy discussions affecting their neighborhoods. These findings suggest that participatory arts can strengthen both democratic participation and community resilience when supported by inclusive governance structures and sustained institutional commitment (Wood et al., 2022; Carpenter, 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the literature consistently identifies several limitations affecting urban participatory arts programs. The dependence on external funding, institutional agendas, and municipal planning priorities may reduce community autonomy if participatory mechanisms become primarily instrumental rather than genuinely collaborative. Furthermore, the visibility of urban arts projects occasionally creates tensions between cultural development, economic regeneration, and commercial interests, raising concerns regarding legitimacy, representation, and equitable

distribution of benefits. These findings demonstrate that successful urban participatory arts initiatives require continuous negotiation between institutional support and community ownership to maintain authentic empowerment processes.

Characteristics of Rural Participatory Arts Programs

The literature reviewed presents rural participatory arts programs as fundamentally grounded in local cultural heritage, community ownership, and place-based knowledge systems. Compared with urban initiatives, rural programs are more frequently associated with traditional performances, community festivals, indigenous cultural practices, heritage preservation, community-based tourism, craft production, and locally organized cultural events. Rather than emphasizing urban regeneration or creative industries, rural participatory arts generally seek to sustain cultural continuity while strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing community identity. Traditional artistic practices therefore function simultaneously as cultural expressions, educational resources, and mechanisms for transmitting local knowledge across generations (Nagy, 2023; Klingmann, 2022; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020).

Community participation within rural settings is typically characterized by stronger local ownership and greater integration into everyday social life. Many rural initiatives employ participatory action research, community-based participatory research, and locally organized governance structures that encourage residents to participate directly in planning, implementation, monitoring, and long-term management of artistic activities. Indigenous communities, in particular, frequently emphasize cultural sovereignty, collective decision-making, and stewardship of cultural resources as central principles guiding participatory arts programs. These governance arrangements reinforce local legitimacy by positioning community members not only as participants but also as custodians of cultural heritage and decision-makers responsible for sustaining artistic traditions (Khoiriah et al., 2022; Sokoy, 2022; Nagy, 2023).

The empowerment outcomes reported across rural studies consistently emphasize cultural and social dimensions of community development. Participatory arts strengthen local identity by preserving traditional knowledge, revitalizing cultural practices, and facilitating intergenerational learning between elders and younger community members. Programs also contribute to the development of community-based creative economies through cultural tourism, local entrepreneurship, and the promotion of heritage-based products. In addition to economic opportunities, participatory arts reinforce collective efficacy by strengthening social cohesion, mutual trust, and collaborative governance, thereby enhancing community resilience and adaptive capacity. These findings suggest that rural participatory arts operate primarily through mechanisms of cultural continuity and community sovereignty rather than through institutional diversification or external partnerships (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020; Klingmann, 2022; Nagy, 2023).

Despite these strengths, rural participatory arts initiatives face substantial implementation challenges. The reviewed literature identifies limited financial resources, restricted access to cultural infrastructure, uneven digital connectivity, and shortages of professional facilitation as persistent constraints affecting program sustainability. Rural initiatives often depend heavily on

community contributions, local institutions, or targeted development funds, making long-term continuity vulnerable to changes in funding availability and governance support. Additional challenges arise when externally initiated projects fail to align with local cultural values or decision-making structures, highlighting the importance of respecting Indigenous rights, community priorities, and culturally appropriate governance mechanisms. Consequently, sustainable rural participatory arts require not only financial investment but also institutional arrangements that recognize local ownership, cultural sovereignty, and the central role of community knowledge in shaping development pathways (Khoiriah et al., 2022; Sokoy, 2022; Nagy, 2023; Klingmann, 2022).

Comparative Urban–Rural Analysis

The comparative synthesis reveals that although participatory arts programs in both urban and rural settings pursue similar objectives of community empowerment, they differ substantially in participation patterns, institutional arrangements, governance structures, and contextual conditions. These differences do not indicate that one setting is inherently more effective than the other; rather, they demonstrate that empowerment emerges through context-specific pathways shaped by local governance, cultural assets, resource availability, and community participation.

One of the most consistent differences concerns the nature and depth of participation. Urban participatory arts programs generally operate within broader governance networks involving municipal governments, cultural institutions, universities, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector partners. These collaborative arrangements create opportunities for co-design, co-production, and shared governance while simultaneously increasing the complexity of decision-making processes. As a result, participation in urban contexts frequently involves multiple stakeholders with differing priorities, requiring continuous negotiation between institutional objectives and community aspirations. Although these arrangements may strengthen collaborative capacity and expand access to financial and technical resources, they also create risks of symbolic participation, selective empowerment, and elite capture when decision-making authority remains concentrated within institutional actors rather than local communities (Clavin et al., 2021; Iaione et al., 2022; Gerosa & Tartari, 2021).

In contrast, rural participatory arts programs are more commonly characterized by community-led governance, cultural sovereignty, and locally embedded decision-making structures. Participation frequently extends beyond consultation toward long-term stewardship of cultural resources, with community members assuming responsibility for planning, implementation, management, and continuation of artistic initiatives. Indigenous and rural communities consistently emphasize collective ownership, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and the protection of cultural heritage as integral components of participatory practice. Consequently, participation in rural contexts tends to be more closely associated with community autonomy and local governance than with institutional collaboration alone (Nagy, 2023; Klingmann, 2022; Khoiriah et al., 2022; Sokoy, 2022).

Institutional support and funding structures also differ systematically between the two contexts. Urban initiatives generally benefit from more diversified funding ecosystems supported by

municipal governments, regional authorities, universities, cultural institutions, philanthropic organizations, and private-sector partnerships. Formal governance arrangements facilitate access to infrastructure, professional expertise, media exposure, and cross-sector collaboration, enabling projects to operate on larger scales and reach more diverse participant groups. Rural initiatives, by comparison, rely more heavily on community contributions, local institutions, targeted development funds, and heritage-based programs. While these arrangements strengthen community ownership and local accountability, they often limit financial flexibility, technical capacity, and opportunities for long-term expansion. The reviewed literature consistently attributes these differences to variations in infrastructure, governance capacity, policy environments, and resource availability rather than to differences in community commitment or artistic quality (Clavin et al., 2021; Iaione et al., 2022; Klingmann, 2022; Khoiriah et al., 2022; Sokoy, 2022).

The synthesis further demonstrates contrasting emphases in empowerment outcomes. Urban participatory arts programs frequently generate empowerment through increased civic participation, expanded social networks, collaborative governance, and improved public visibility of marginalized communities. These outcomes are closely associated with the development of bridging and linking social capital, where relationships extend across governmental, institutional, and community boundaries. Conversely, rural participatory arts programs more consistently emphasize cultural identity, community sovereignty, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and collective ownership of cultural resources. These outcomes reflect the strengthening of bonding social capital, reinforcing internal cohesion and long-term stewardship of local traditions. Despite these contextual differences, both urban and rural initiatives consistently identify voice, agency, social capital, governance participation, and community resilience as central dimensions of empowerment, indicating that empowerment is multidimensional but contextually expressed.

The reviewed studies also identify several contextual factors explaining similarities and differences in empowerment outcomes. Infrastructure supporting participation, governance capacity, funding ecosystems, local cultural assets, and rights-based governance arrangements collectively shape the design, implementation, and sustainability of participatory arts programs. Urban contexts generally benefit from stronger institutional support and multi-actor partnerships, whereas rural settings rely more extensively on cultural heritage, local identity, and community-led governance. Across both settings, however, successful empowerment depends upon meaningful participation, equitable decision-making, and governance structures capable of balancing external support with genuine community ownership (Clavin et al., 2021; Iaione et al., 2022; Carpenter, 2022; Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; Nagy, 2023; Klingmann, 2022; Khoiriah et al., 2022; Sokoy, 2022).

Cross-case Synthesis

The cross-case synthesis demonstrates several recurring patterns across the reviewed literature. First, participatory arts consistently function as mechanisms for strengthening community empowerment when participation extends beyond attendance to include co-creation, shared decision-making, and community ownership. Regardless of geographical context, empowerment is most evident in programs that actively involve community members throughout the planning,

implementation, and governance processes rather than limiting participation to artistic performance or consultation.

Second, empowerment outcomes consistently encompass multiple interconnected dimensions. Individual outcomes include increased confidence, creative competence, leadership, and communication skills. Social outcomes involve strengthened trust, community networks, collaboration, and collective action. Cultural outcomes emphasize identity formation, heritage preservation, and intergenerational transmission of local knowledge. Civic outcomes include enhanced participation in community decision-making, advocacy, and governance processes, while economic outcomes emerge through creative entrepreneurship, cultural tourism, and local employment opportunities. These multidimensional outcomes reinforce the understanding that community empowerment is not a single measurable construct but an integrated process operating simultaneously across personal, social, cultural, institutional, and economic domains.

Third, governance emerges as a critical enabling mechanism across all contexts. Studies consistently demonstrate that institutional support, transparent decision-making, equitable partnerships, and long-term organizational commitment significantly influence program sustainability. Nevertheless, governance arrangements must remain responsive to community priorities because excessive institutional control may undermine empowerment through selective participation or the marginalization of local voices. Conversely, community-led governance supported by appropriate institutional partnerships appears to generate more durable empowerment outcomes by balancing external resources with local ownership.

Finally, the synthesis highlights the importance of contextual sensitivity when interpreting participatory arts programs. Although common empowerment mechanisms are observable across studies, identical program models cannot be assumed to produce equivalent outcomes in different social and cultural environments. Instead, successful participatory arts initiatives demonstrate the capacity to adapt governance arrangements, participation strategies, and artistic practices to local conditions while preserving meaningful community involvement throughout the development process.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the comparative synthesis indicates that participatory arts contribute to community empowerment across both urban and rural settings through context-dependent but conceptually related mechanisms. Urban programs generally emphasize collaborative governance, institutional partnerships, civic participation, and cross-sector networking, supported by relatively diverse funding structures and formal organizational arrangements. Rural programs, in contrast, prioritize community ownership, cultural sovereignty, intergenerational learning, and heritage-based development, supported primarily through local institutions and community participation. Despite these differences, the reviewed evidence consistently demonstrates that empowerment is strengthened when communities participate as co-creators, decision-makers, and custodians of artistic processes rather than as passive recipients of externally designed interventions. These findings provide the empirical foundation for the subsequent discussion, which interprets the

observed similarities and differences through the perspectives of Empowerment Theory, Social Capital Theory, Cultural Democracy, Creative Placemaking, and Community Resilience.

The findings of this comparative secondary-data study reinforce the growing consensus that participatory arts function as more than artistic or cultural activities; they represent collaborative governance processes capable of strengthening community empowerment across diverse socio-cultural contexts. The synthesis demonstrates that participatory arts consistently facilitate the development of individual agency, collective participation, social relationships, and cultural identity in both urban and rural communities. However, the pathways through which empowerment is achieved differ according to governance arrangements, institutional structures, cultural assets, and resource availability. These findings support the central assumptions of Empowerment Theory while simultaneously illustrating that empowerment should be understood as a context-dependent and multidimensional process rather than a uniform outcome of participation.

From the perspective of Empowerment Theory, the reviewed evidence confirms that meaningful participation contributes to increased agency, voice, and decision-making capacity when communities are actively involved throughout project planning, implementation, and governance. Urban participatory arts initiatives frequently strengthen civic participation by creating opportunities for residents to engage in neighborhood planning, public-space design, and collaborative governance alongside municipal authorities, universities, artists, and civil society organizations (Clavin et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2022). These findings are consistent with the theoretical proposition that empowerment involves expanding individuals' and communities' capacity to influence decisions affecting their lives. Nevertheless, the literature also cautions that empowerment cannot be assumed simply because participation is present. Studies examining urban regeneration and bottom-up place branding reveal that participatory processes may become selective or co-opted when institutional actors retain disproportionate control over decision-making, thereby limiting genuine community influence and creating risks of elite capture (Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; Carpenter, 2022). Consequently, the present synthesis suggests that empowerment depends not only on participation itself but also on the distribution of authority, transparency of governance, and long-term institutional commitment to community leadership.

The findings also provide substantial support for Social Capital Theory by demonstrating that participatory arts strengthen social relationships through the development of trust, reciprocity, collaboration, and collective action. Across both urban and rural contexts, participatory arts facilitate the creation of social networks that enable communities to mobilize resources, exchange knowledge, and respond collectively to local challenges. However, important contextual differences emerge regarding the dominant forms of social capital generated. Urban participatory arts programs more frequently cultivate bridging and linking social capital by connecting community members with governmental agencies, universities, cultural institutions, and external organizations. These broader networks expand access to resources, technical expertise, and policy influence, thereby strengthening collaborative governance and institutional capacity. In contrast, rural participatory arts initiatives predominantly reinforce bonding social capital through shared cultural practices, intergenerational learning, mutual support, and collective stewardship of local heritage (Wood et al., 2022; Carpenter, 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Nagy, 2023). Rather than representing competing forms of social capital, these findings suggest complementary pathways

through which participatory arts contribute to community empowerment under different socio-cultural conditions.

The comparative findings likewise extend the principles of Cultural Democracy by illustrating that empowerment is closely associated with communities' rights to create, interpret, manage, and govern their own cultural resources. Throughout the reviewed literature, participatory arts are consistently portrayed as mechanisms through which communities become active producers of culture instead of passive consumers of externally designed artistic programs. This rights-based perspective is particularly evident in rural and Indigenous contexts, where artistic activities frequently serve as instruments for protecting cultural sovereignty, preserving traditional knowledge, and reinforcing community authority over cultural representation (Klingmann, 2022; Sokoy, 2022). Urban initiatives similarly promote democratic cultural participation by encouraging collaborative design of public spaces and cultural activities; however, several studies caution that these processes may become instrumentalized when cultural participation primarily supports urban branding, tourism development, or economic regeneration without ensuring equitable community control (Gerosa & Tartari, 2021). The present findings therefore reinforce Cultural Democracy as an essential framework for evaluating participatory arts, emphasizing that genuine empowerment requires communities to exercise meaningful authority over cultural decision-making rather than merely contributing labor or symbolic participation.

Creative Placemaking provides an additional explanatory framework for understanding the differences observed between urban and rural participatory arts programs. In urban settings, participatory arts commonly contribute to neighborhood revitalization, public-space activation, and the construction of place identity through collaborative artistic interventions involving multiple institutional actors. These initiatives strengthen community visibility, improve the quality of public spaces, and encourage residents to participate in shaping their urban environments (Clavin et al., 2021; Heard et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the literature also highlights the dual nature of placemaking processes. While collaborative artistic projects can generate inclusive public spaces and strengthen community identity, they may simultaneously contribute to gentrification, selective empowerment, or cultural commodification when governance arrangements fail to protect equitable participation and benefit-sharing (Wichowsky et al., 2022). Rural participatory arts, by comparison, employ placemaking primarily through the preservation of local heritage, traditional practices, and culturally significant landscapes, thereby strengthening place attachment and community ownership rather than urban competitiveness or economic branding. These contrasting applications of Creative Placemaking illustrate how identical participatory principles may generate different developmental trajectories according to local institutional and cultural contexts.

Finally, the synthesis strongly supports Community Resilience Theory by demonstrating that participatory arts enhance communities' adaptive capacity through collaborative learning, social networking, cultural continuity, and shared governance. Across the reviewed studies, resilience is consistently associated with communities' ability to mobilize local knowledge, reorganize social resources, and respond collectively to environmental, social, or economic challenges through participatory cultural activities (Jiang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Living laboratories, co-design processes, and community-led artistic initiatives illustrate how participatory arts facilitate

experimentation, collective problem-solving, and institutional innovation that strengthen long-term adaptive capacity. However, the literature also indicates that resilience cannot be sustained through short-term projects alone. Durable resilience requires stable governance arrangements, continuous resource flows, institutional embedding, and ongoing community participation beyond the lifespan of externally funded interventions (Ganga et al., 2024; Mansfield et al., 2024). These findings therefore suggest that participatory arts contribute most effectively to community resilience when artistic engagement becomes integrated into long-term community governance rather than functioning as isolated cultural projects.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives converge on a common conclusion: participatory arts contribute to community empowerment most effectively when supported by inclusive governance, equitable participation, cultural rights, and sustainable institutional arrangements. At the same time, the comparative synthesis demonstrates that empowerment remains vulnerable to unequal power relations, selective participation, cultural appropriation, and institutional co-option if governance mechanisms fail to protect meaningful community authority. Consequently, the present findings suggest that the success of participatory arts depends less on geographical location itself than on the quality of participatory governance, the recognition of community cultural rights, and the durability of collaborative institutional structures that sustain empowerment beyond individual projects.

The comparative findings also have important implications for cultural policy, participatory governance, and community development in Indonesia. The evidence indicates that participatory arts should no longer be regarded merely as cultural programs or creative activities but as governance instruments capable of strengthening democratic participation and sustainable community development. The experiences documented across both urban and rural contexts demonstrate that empowerment is most effective when communities participate as equal partners in planning, implementation, monitoring, and long-term management of cultural initiatives. Consequently, Indonesian cultural policies could move beyond event-based or project-oriented approaches by institutionalizing participatory governance within local cultural planning. Such an approach is consistent with multi-actor governance models that integrate local governments, universities, civil society organizations, artists, and community groups while preserving meaningful community decision-making authority (Calzada, 2023; Geekiyanage et al., 2020). Embedding participatory arts within local governance structures would not only strengthen policy legitimacy but also improve the sustainability of community empowerment by ensuring that cultural initiatives remain responsive to local priorities rather than external institutional agendas.

The findings further suggest that future cultural policy should recognize the distinct yet complementary strengths of urban and rural participatory arts. Urban programs benefit from diversified institutional networks, professional expertise, and broader funding opportunities that facilitate innovation and cross-sector collaboration. However, these advantages should be accompanied by governance safeguards that prevent selective empowerment, cultural commodification, or the marginalization of local voices. Rural and Indigenous programs, by contrast, illustrate the importance of community ownership, cultural sovereignty, and heritage-based development as foundations for sustainable empowerment. Policy interventions should therefore strengthen locally governed cultural institutions, support intergenerational transmission

of traditional knowledge, and expand financial and technical assistance without undermining community autonomy (Jaya et al., 2022; Pietta & Tononi, 2021; Witteveen et al., 2022). Rather than applying identical policy models across diverse geographical contexts, the evidence supports differentiated strategies that respect contextual variation while maintaining common principles of participation, equity, and shared governance.

Another important implication concerns the integration of participatory arts into broader placemaking and community development agendas. The reviewed literature indicates that artistic interventions can strengthen place identity, activate public spaces, and stimulate local creative economies when implemented through inclusive governance. Nevertheless, experiences from urban regeneration also demonstrate that placemaking initiatives may inadvertently contribute to gentrification, cultural homogenization, or unequal benefit distribution if artistic activities primarily serve economic branding objectives rather than community interests (Costa et al., 2024). Accordingly, Indonesian placemaking policies should incorporate explicit protections for community cultural rights, transparent decision-making procedures, and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms. In rural areas, placemaking strategies should prioritize endogenous development by building upon local heritage, Indigenous knowledge, and community-led cultural economies instead of externally imposed development models (Lekaba et al., 2022; Menezes et al., 2023). Such approaches would reinforce both Cultural Democracy and Community Resilience by ensuring that cultural development remains grounded in local knowledge and collective ownership.

Although the present synthesis provides a comprehensive comparative framework, several methodological limitations remain evident within the existing body of participatory arts research. First, substantial heterogeneity in research designs, conceptual definitions, and outcome measures continues to limit direct comparison across studies. Different authors employ diverse understandings of participation, empowerment, social capital, and resilience, resulting in inconsistent operationalization and reporting of key constructs. The absence of standardized empowerment indicators further complicates efforts to synthesize findings across geographical and disciplinary contexts (Ganga et al., 2024; Heard et al., 2023). Second, many published studies rely on cross-sectional or project-based evaluations that assess short-term outcomes immediately following program implementation. Consequently, relatively little evidence is available regarding the durability of empowerment processes, long-term governance transformation, or sustained community resilience beyond externally funded interventions (Jiang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Third, while participatory arts are frequently presented as inherently empowering, relatively few studies critically examine power relations, institutional asymmetries, or the mechanisms through which participation may become selective, symbolic, or co-opted. More theoretically informed analyses are therefore required to understand how governance structures shape the distribution of authority and benefits within participatory processes (Carpenter, 2022; Gerosa & Tartari, 2021; Williams et al., 2023).

These methodological limitations provide several directions for future comparative research. A priority should be the development of a standardized multidimensional framework capable of measuring empowerment across diverse participatory arts contexts. Such a framework should incorporate consistent indicators of voice, agency, social capital, governance participation, cultural rights, resilience, and community ownership while remaining sufficiently flexible to accommodate

contextual diversity (Clavin et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2022; Ganga et al., 2024). Future studies would also benefit from longitudinal and multi-site comparative designs that follow empowerment trajectories over extended periods, thereby enabling researchers to distinguish temporary project outcomes from durable institutional and community transformation. Comparative investigations across urban and rural Indonesia could further identify which contextual factors function as mediators or moderators of empowerment, providing stronger evidence for policy development and theoretical refinement (Jiang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Mansfield et al., 2024).

Methodologically, greater adoption of abductive cross-case comparison and Community-Based Participatory Research principles would strengthen future investigations by combining rigorous comparative analysis with meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the research process. Integrating community members into research design, interpretation, and dissemination would enhance both analytical validity and ethical integrity while ensuring that research findings remain relevant to participating communities (Grabowski et al., 2024; Williams et al., 2023; Bazooband et al., 2021). In addition, wider implementation of reporting standards such as ENTREQ, SRQR, and SWiM would improve transparency, comparability, and reproducibility across qualitative evidence syntheses and mixed-methods reviews (Keiller et al., 2023; Mansfield et al., 2024). Collectively, these methodological developments would contribute to a more cumulative and theoretically robust body of participatory arts scholarship.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that participatory arts represent a multidimensional governance approach through which communities strengthen agency, social capital, cultural rights, and resilience. The comparative evidence indicates that differences between urban and rural settings are explained primarily by governance configurations, institutional capacity, cultural assets, and resource availability rather than by geographical location alone. Consequently, sustainable community empowerment depends upon governance systems that combine inclusive participation, equitable power distribution, community ownership, and long-term institutional commitment. These findings extend existing theories of empowerment, cultural democracy, creative placemaking, and community resilience by illustrating how their principles converge within participatory arts practice and by providing an integrated conceptual foundation for evidence-based cultural policy and future comparative research in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how participatory arts contribute to community empowerment in urban and rural Indonesia through a comparative secondary-data analysis of published empirical research. By synthesizing evidence from diverse participatory arts initiatives, the study demonstrates that participatory arts function not only as cultural practices but also as governance mechanisms that facilitate collective participation, strengthen social relationships, preserve cultural identity, and enhance community resilience. The comparative perspective reveals that although both urban and rural programs pursue similar empowerment objectives, they achieve these outcomes through different contextual pathways shaped by governance arrangements, institutional capacity, cultural resources, and funding structures.

The findings indicate that urban participatory arts programs generally benefit from diversified institutional support, cross-sector partnerships, and broader funding opportunities. These conditions facilitate collaboration among governments, universities, cultural organizations, civil society, and local communities, contributing to stronger civic participation, expanded social networks, and improved public visibility of marginalized groups. However, the review also identifies important governance challenges, including selective empowerment, unequal decision-making, and the potential co-option of participatory processes for branding or economic development. These findings suggest that institutional support alone is insufficient to guarantee meaningful empowerment unless accompanied by transparent governance, equitable participation, and genuine community influence over decision-making.

In contrast, rural participatory arts programs are characterized by stronger community ownership, cultural sovereignty, and place-based governance. Participatory arts in rural and Indigenous communities frequently strengthen cultural identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, collective stewardship of cultural heritage, and locally embedded creative economies. Although rural initiatives commonly experience limitations related to infrastructure, financial resources, and technical capacity, their governance models often demonstrate higher levels of community control and cultural continuity. These findings emphasize that sustainable empowerment depends not solely on resource availability but also on the extent to which communities retain authority over cultural production, governance, and long-term program development.

A central contribution of this study is the identification of participation quality as a more influential determinant of empowerment than geographical location itself. Across both urban and rural contexts, the strongest empowerment outcomes consistently occur when communities participate as co-creators, decision-makers, and custodians of artistic processes rather than as passive beneficiaries. This finding supports the integration of Empowerment Theory, Social Capital Theory, Cultural Democracy, Creative Placemaking, and Community Resilience into a unified analytical framework capable of explaining how participatory arts generate multidimensional community development outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes an integrated comparative framework that links participation levels, governance arrangements, social capital formation, cultural rights, and resilience within participatory arts research. This framework advances existing scholarship by demonstrating how these concepts interact across different geographical contexts while providing a structured basis for comparative analysis. Methodologically, the study contributes a standardized evidence synthesis approach that combines systematic literature review procedures, qualitative evidence synthesis, structured focused comparison, and multidimensional empowerment indicators. Such an approach improves transparency and comparability across heterogeneous participatory arts studies and offers a foundation for future comparative research.

The findings also have important practical implications for cultural policy and community development in Indonesia. Policymakers should recognize participatory arts as strategic instruments for strengthening democratic governance, community participation, and sustainable development rather than limiting them to cultural programming alone. Future cultural policies

should promote inclusive governance structures, community co-design, participatory budgeting, and long-term institutional partnerships while safeguarding community ownership, cultural rights, and equitable participation. Differentiated policy approaches are also required to accommodate the distinct strengths and needs of urban and rural communities, ensuring that local cultural assets and governance capacities remain central to development strategies.

Despite these contributions, the study is constrained by the limitations inherent in secondary-data research, including variation in methodological quality, conceptual definitions, reporting standards, and contextual diversity across the reviewed studies. These limitations highlight the need for more standardized evaluation frameworks and longitudinal comparative research capable of examining the long-term sustainability of empowerment outcomes. Future investigations should employ mixed-methods and longitudinal designs, develop common empowerment indicators, and expand comparative analyses across diverse cultural and geographical settings to strengthen theoretical development and evidence-based policymaking.

Overall, this study concludes that participatory arts constitute an effective and context-sensitive approach to community empowerment in Indonesia. While urban and rural communities differ in governance arrangements, institutional environments, and cultural assets, both demonstrate that meaningful participation, shared decision-making, and community ownership are fundamental conditions for sustainable empowerment. By integrating fragmented evidence into a coherent comparative framework, this study provides a stronger conceptual and methodological foundation for future participatory arts research and supports the development of more inclusive, culturally responsive, and sustainable community development policies.

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