

AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN BOOSTING THE COASTAL ECONOMY IN THE VILLAGE OF WIRINGTASI, PINRANG REGENCY

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Abstract

Coastal communities are social groups inhabiting transitional areas between land and sea, such as beaches, estuaries, and mangrove areas, whose livelihoods are primarily dependent on marine resources. This study aims to analyze the role of village officials in the coastal community empowerment process and the impact of economic empowerment on improving community welfare in Wiringtasi Village, Suppa District, Pinrang Regency. A qualitative method with a descriptive empirical approach was employed. Data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews with village officials, community leaders, fishermen, and fish farmers, as well as documentation studies. Data analysis followed three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing based on the Miles and Huberman (2014) model. The results indicate that the Wiringtasi Village Apparatus has carried out four empowerment roles: (1) sustainable natural resource management through sea turtle conservation and mangrove planting; (2) facilitation of access to economic resources, including digital marketing and entrepreneurship training; (3) community involvement in decision-making through village deliberations; and (4) ecological and environmental protection. The impact of this empowerment is reflected in increased community income, improved quality of life, strengthened social networks between fishermen, fish farmers, and local government, as well as the sustainable preservation of coastal ecosystems.

Keywords: Community Empowerment, Coastal Economy, Welfare, Village Apparatus

INTRODUCTION

Coastal communities are social groups that inhabit transitional zones between land and sea, such as beaches, estuaries, and mangrove areas. Their primary livelihoods depend on marine resources, including capture fisheries, aquaculture, and seafood processing. Globally, approximately 600 million people depend on the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for their survival, and the majority are in developing countries (FAO, 2022). In Indonesia, coastal communities have a close relationship with their surrounding natural environment, and their well-being is highly dependent on the health and sustainability of coastal ecosystems. They often face complex socio economic challenges, such as structural poverty, limited access to technology and capital, and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation (Satria, 2022).

Efforts to empower coastal communities in Indonesia have a strong legal foundation. Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, specifically Articles 4 and 78–79, mandates that villages have the authority to manage the interests of their communities, including managing local resources such as fisheries and coastal tourism, as well as promoting empowerment to improve well-being and reduce poverty. Law No. 27 of 2007 as amended by Law No. 1 of 2014 on the Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands requires the government to empower coastal communities through training, the provision of capital assistance, and institutional strengthening. Furthermore, Law No. 7 of 2016 on the Protection and Empowerment of Fishermen, Fish Farmers, and Salt Farmers reaffirms the state's obligation to provide protection against economic and environmental risks, ensure access to capital and technology, and develop innovative marketing systems for fishery products (Ikan et al., 2022; Rahmadani, 2023).

Wiringtasi Village, Suppa Subdistrict, Pinrang Regency, is a coastal village with significant marine natural resource potential, particularly in the capture fisheries and pond aquaculture sectors. Lowita Beach, located in this area, serves as the center of economic activity for the local community. However, this potential has not been fully utilized due to limited human resources, inadequate supporting infrastructure, and poor access to markets and capital. These conditions underscore the need for planned, effective, and sustainable community empowerment as a strategy for enhancing the coastal economy (Putra et al., 2021).

In the context of village empowerment, village officials play a central role as facilitators and drivers of programs. Researchers have found a gap between the available potential for empowerment and the effectiveness of its implementation on the ground, which is caused, among other things, by a lack of funding for infrastructure and limited fishing gear for coastal communities. The effectiveness of coastal community empowerment programs is largely determined by the active involvement of the community as well as the capacity of village officials to carry out integrated management, facilitation, and advocacy functions (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2020).

Various studies have demonstrated that the empowerment of coastal communities based on local potential and involving active community participation has proven capable of significantly improving well-being. Fadilah et al. (2021) found that a fisherman-group-based empowerment program in South Sulawesi successfully increased members' average income by 34% over two years. Musa et al. (2022) emphasize that the role of village officials as mediators between government policies and community needs is a key factor in the success of empowerment programs. However, studies that specifically analyze these two dimensions of empowerment simultaneously namely the role of village officials and its impact on community well-being in the context of coastal villages in Pinrang Regency remain very limited. This gap serves as the rationale for this study.

This study aims to: (1) analyze the role of village officials in the process of empowering coastal communities in Wiringtasi Village; and (2) analyze the impact of economic empowerment on improving the well-being of coastal communities in Wiringtasi Village. The research findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of studies on coastal community empowerment, while also serving as a practical reference for the village government, the Pinrang Regency government, and other stakeholders in designing more effective and sustainable empowerment programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using an empirical descriptive method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena related to the empowerment of coastal communities within the context of a specific locality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The empirical descriptive method is used to systematically describe facts obtained directly from the field through interaction with research subjects (Sugiyono, 2020). The research was conducted in Wiringtasi Village, Suppa Subdistrict, Pinrang Regency, South Sulawesi Province. This location was selected purposively because Wiringtasi Village is a coastal village with significant marine resource potential but still faces challenges in optimizing the economic empowerment of its community.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants based on the relevance of their roles and knowledge to the research focus (Miles et al., 2014). Research informants were divided into two categories: (1) internal informants, including the Village Head of Wiringtasi, the Village Secretary, and staff in the empowerment division; and (2) external informants, including community leaders, the head of the fishermen's group, aquaculture farmers, and members of the women's group processing marine products. A total of 12 informants were interviewed.

Data were collected through three primary techniques. First, participatory observation of empowerment activities, coastal environmental conditions, and natural resource management practices taking place in Wiringtasi Village. Second, in-depth interviews with all informants using a semi-structured interview guide. Third, a documentary study of official village documents, empowerment program reports, village monograph data, and relevant regulations. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation (Moleong, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which comprises three stages: (1) data condensation, which involves the selection, focusing, and transformation of raw field data; (2) data display, which involves

organizing the data into descriptive narratives, matrices, or charts to facilitate drawing conclusions; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, which involves interpreting the systematically presented data and verifying its accuracy through reconfirmation with informants.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

1. The Role of Village Officials in the Empowerment of Coastal Communities in Wiringtasi Village

Community empowerment is an effort aimed at improving the dignity and status of community groups still living in poverty and underdevelopment by equipping them with the necessary skills and resources to become self-reliant (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2020). In Wiringtasi Village, village officials carry out four empowerment roles, which can be described as follows.

a. Natural Resource Management (NRM)

The Wiringtasi Village Administration actively conducts outreach to the community, particularly coastal youth, regarding the importance of preserving marine ecosystems. The programs implemented include sea turtle conservation and mangrove planting, which directly support the sustainability of coastal ecosystems. In addition, village officials collaborate with security personnel to educate fishermen against destructive fishing practices, such as dynamite fishing and the use of poison. This was confirmed by the Village Head of Wiringtasi in the following interview:

"We regularly encourage the village youth to participate in conservation activities, whether it be mangrove planting or protecting sea turtle habitats. We also work with Babinsa and Bhabinkamtibmas to discipline fishermen who still use methods that damage the marine ecosystem." (Village Head of Wiringtasi, Interview, February 2025)

This finding aligns with the concept of ecology-based empowerment proposed by Satria (2022), which states that sustainable management of coastal resources can only be achieved if local communities are actively involved as subjects, not merely as objects of management.

b. Access to Economic Resources

To promote economic growth in the community, the Wiringtasi Village administration facilitates various productive economic programs, including digital product marketing through social media, entrepreneurship training, and access to capital through village funds and cooperatives. The Head of Wiringtasi Village stated:

"We help our community members market their products online. We have also conducted entrepreneurship training for the wives of fishermen so they can process their catch into value-added products such as fish flakes and crackers. Additionally, we facilitate access to capital through village funds and partnerships with the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes)." (Head of Wiringtasi Village, Interview, February 2025)

Musa et al. (2022) assert that facilitating access to markets and capital are two critical components of the economic empowerment of coastal communities that are often overlooked in local government programs.

c. Involvement in Decision Making

The community of Wiringtasi Village is consistently involved in every development planning consultation forum (musrenbang) and village meeting to set program and policy priorities. One community leader stated:

"All residents are consulted before programs are decided. If there are plans to build a pier or procure fishing gear, we are always invited to a meeting first. We feel that our opinions are heard." (Community Leader, Interview, February 2025)

This participatory approach aligns with the principle of empowerment outlined by Hikmat (2021), which states that community involvement in decision-making is a key indicator of authentic and sustainable empowerment.

d. Ecological Sustainability and Environmental Protection

The empowerment program in Wiringtasi Village is designed to have a long-term ecological impact. Village officials are collaborating with relevant agencies to implement a program to raise awareness about sustainable ecosystem conservation. A Wiringtasi Village staff member stated:

"We are currently working with the District Marine and Fisheries Office to conduct regular outreach on the importance of ecosystem conservation. This conservation program has already led to an increase in the mangrove population and a decrease in cases of illegal fishing in our area." (Wiringtasi Village Staff, Interview, March 2025)

2. The Impact of Economic Empowerment on Improving the Well-being of Coastal Communities in Wiringtasi Village

The economic empowerment initiatives implemented by the Wiringtasi Village administration have had a tangible impact on the well-being of the coastal community. This impact can be seen from the perspective of fishermen and aquaculture farmers, who are the main drivers of the coastal economy. A senior fisherman shared:

"Since the training program and better fishing gear assistance began, our catch has increased. We've also been able to sell fish directly to buyers in the city via WhatsApp, which village officials taught us. My income has risen by about 30% compared to two years ago." (Fisherman, Interview, March 2025)

In line with this, a shrimp farmer stated:

"We were assisted in implementing environmentally friendly shrimp farming methods, and as a result, our shrimp are of higher quality, commanding a higher price. The village also helped us form a shrimp farming group that can now access KUR loans from the bank." (Shrimp Farmer, Interview, March 2025)

Overall, the impact of the empowerment program in Wiringtasi Village includes an increase in the average income of coastal communities, improved access to health and education services due to increased purchasing power, and the formation of stronger business networks among fishermen, shrimp farmers, and the local government. These findings are supported by Fadilah et al. (2021), who found that a fisher-led empowerment program in South Sulawesi was able to significantly increase members' incomes through capacity building and improved market access.

Discussion

1. The Role of Village Officials in the Empowerment of Coastal Communities in Wiringtasi Village

In fact, the findings of this study demonstrate that the officials of Wiringtasi Village have fulfilled an empowerment role encompassing four key dimensions: natural resource management, economic facilitation, community participation, and environmental protection. These achievements confirm the relevance of the capacity-building theory proposed by Eade (1997) and further developed by Mardikanto and Soebiato (2020), which emphasizes that local capacity building must encompass infrastructure development, education and training, and the strengthening of local organizations as three mutually reinforcing pillars.

Effective empowerment requires a participatory approach, respect for local wisdom, and the active and equal involvement of the community. Empowerment agents must act as facilitators who help communities develop their potential through an inclusive and sustainable process (Hikmat, 2021). The findings of this study indicate that the officials of Wiringtasi Village have fulfilled this facilitator role, as evidenced by the community's active participation in the musrenbang forums and their trust in the jointly designed programs.

Musa et al. (2022) assert that the role of village officials as mediators between government policies and community needs is a determining factor in the success of empowerment. This is confirmed in Wiringtasi Village, where village officials not only act as implementers of top-down programs but also respond to the community's real needs in a bottom-up manner, particularly regarding the procurement of environmentally friendly fishing gear and training in the processing of fishery products. This situation is also consistent with the findings of Putra et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of synergy between village officials and community groups in optimizing the potential of coastal resources.

2. The Impact of Economic Empowerment on Improving the Well-being of Coastal Communities in Wiringtasi Village

The impact of economic empowerment in Wiringtasi Village can be analyzed through the framework of sustainable development theory, which emphasizes that community empowerment must align with three main pillars: economic, social, and environmental (Sachs, 2015; Handini et

al., 2019). An analysis of these three pillars provides a comprehensive picture of the empowerment achievements in this village.

- a. **Economic Pillar.** The Wiringtasi Village administration successfully promoted an increase in community income through the provision of education on proper fishing techniques, facilitation of digital marketing, and access to capital. The 30% increase in income reported by the informant fishermen aligns with the findings of Fadilah et al. (2021), who recorded an average income increase of 34% among groups of fishermen who received structured mentoring in South Sulawesi.
- b. **Social Pillar.** The quality of life for the community improves as social networks among fishermen, aquaculture farmers, and local governments are strengthened. The cooperation fostered through aquaculture farmer groups and village cooperatives not only impacts economic aspects but also strengthens social cohesion and mutual trust among community members. This supports the findings of Musa et al. (2022) that successful empowerment programs are always accompanied by the strengthening of social capital.
- c. **Environmental Pillar.** The implementation of environmentally friendly aquaculture ponds and conservation programs for mangroves and sea turtles has proven to maintain the sustainability of coastal ecosystems. Village officials conduct training and education to ensure fishing practices do not damage marine ecosystems, which in the long term will ensure the availability of resources for future generations. This principle aligns with the blue economy concept, which promotes the sustainable and responsible use of marine resources (Satria, 2022).

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the empowerment of coastal communities in Wiringtasi Village has yielded measurable positive impacts on all three pillars of sustainable development. This success is inseparable from the central role of village officials who consistently carry out the functions of facilitation, mediation, and advocacy in an integrated manner (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2020). However, there is still room for improvement, particularly regarding the strengthening of physical infrastructure and the enhancement of human resource capacity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the research findings and discussion, two main conclusions can be drawn. First, the officials of Wiringtasi Village have actively carried out their role in empowering the coastal community through four dimensions: (1) sustainable management of natural resources through sea turtle conservation and mangrove planting programs; (2) facilitating access to economic resources, including digital marketing, entrepreneurship training, and capital; (3) community involvement in decision-making through village deliberation forums; and (4) ecological and environmental protection. Second, the economic empowerment initiatives have had a tangible impact on improving the well-being of the coastal community in Wiringtasi Village, as evidenced by increased incomes for fishermen and aquaculture farmers, improved quality of life, strengthened social networks, and the preservation of the coastal ecosystem. These achievements were realized through the application of a sustainable development approach that integrates three pillars: economic, social, and environmental.

Recommendations

First, the Wiringtasi Village Government is advised to further intensify empowerment programs based on local potential, such as the processing of high-value-added marine products, seaweed cultivation, and the development of coastal ecotourism, so that the community has diverse livelihood alternatives and does not rely entirely on the capture fisheries sector. Second, the Pinrang Regency government needs to increase budgetary support and technical capacity for village officials, particularly regarding digital technology proficiency and the management of empowerment programs. Third, periodic evaluations of the impact of empowerment programs using measurable welfare indicators are necessary so that programs can be continuously refined to meet community needs. Fourth, strengthening partnerships between village governments, local governments, microfinance institutions, universities, and the private sector is highly recommended to expand the reach and sustainability of coastal community empowerment programs in Wiringtasi Village.

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