

EMPOWERMENT OF FISHING COMMUNITY IN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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IJASR 2021

VOLUME 4

ISSUE 5 SEPTEMBER – OCTBER

ISSN: 2581-7876

**Abstract:** Poverty is common among fishermen. This poverty is caused by many factors, including the absence of empowerment or inappropriate empowerment. This study aims to identify the empowerment of the fishing community in Bambalamotu sub-district, Pasangkayu district, West Sulawesi province. The population of this study was groups of fishermen and the sample was the fishermen in each group determined using the purposive sampling technique. The data analysis covered data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that the empowerment of the fishing community had not been carried out in accordance with the fishermen's wish in which the stakeholders did not provide training causing the low knowledge of fishermen. The stakeholders only focused on providing fishing facilities such as boats and fishing gear without considering the fishermen's low skill in the management of catches. Thus, fishermen's economy gets worse and the poverty level becomes higher.

**Keywords:** poverty, fishermen, empowerment,

**Introduction**

Indonesia has a great potential in fisheries (Ginting, Nasution, Subhilhar, & Harahap, 2018; Vibriyanti, 2016). Around 1,700 islands and coasts in Indonesia are inhabited by fishermen with low incomes or even poor or left behind with very limited access to information (Ahdan, Kaharuddin, & Yusriadi Yusriadi, 2019). A total of 95.6% are traditional and poor fishermen living around the coast (Rahman, 2019). In other words, most coastal communities work as fishermen with low-income levels. Furthermore, traditional fishermen in Indonesia are often categorized as poor (Ginting et al., 2018; Maani, Firnaldi, & Fajri, 2018).

The Indonesian government has carried out many programs to empower traditional fishermen, but they were not successful in improving the welfare of fishermen (Ahdan et al., 2019; Ginting et al., 2018). This failure was caused by many factors such as inappropriate program targets, methods, strategies, and approaches used in empowerment (Waluyo, 2006). The government must formulate the best way to empower the fishing community by considering many aspects inherent in the community such as socio-cultural and potential of the fishing communities or the target of the empowerment program.

This study focuses on the empowerment of traditional fishermen in Bambalamotu sub-district, Pasangkayu District. The condition of fishermen in this area is not much different from other traditional fishermen in other areas of Indonesia. They live in poverty so that they got a difficulty. Many studies concerning the empowerment of fishermen have been conducted in various regions or countries. One of them is by Ginting et al. (2018) in Percut Village, Percut Sei Tuan sub-district, North Sumatra province, Indonesia and the study found that traditional fishermen had limitations in fishing equipment. Meanwhile, Rahim et al. (2021) conducted a study in Tanete Rilau, Barru, Soppeng Riaja, and Balusu sub-districts showed that the economy of fishermen's families could be improved by having skills in managing catches.

The results of previous studies showed that the limitations of fishermen made empowerment results invisible, while other studies revealed that the skills possessed by fishermen could increase family income. The findings of Ginting et al. (2018) have similarities with the phenomenon of the present study in which the poverty of fishermen in Bambalamotu Sub-district, Pasangkayu District, West Sulawesi is caused by limited fishing gear so that the catch cannot support their economy. Based on the result of Rahim et al. (2021), the government needs to empower fishing communities not only by providing fishing gear or fishing facilities but also by conducting training to manage and market the catches as it has been proven to help increase the income of fishermen's families and then finally can reduce the poverty.

Based on the phenomenon explained above, it is important for related parties, in this case, the government, to pay attention to the welfare of fishermen, especially those living on the coast. Therefore, this study aims to identify the community empowerment of coastal fishermen in Bambalamotu Sub-district, Pasangkayu District, West Sulawesi.

**Literature Review**

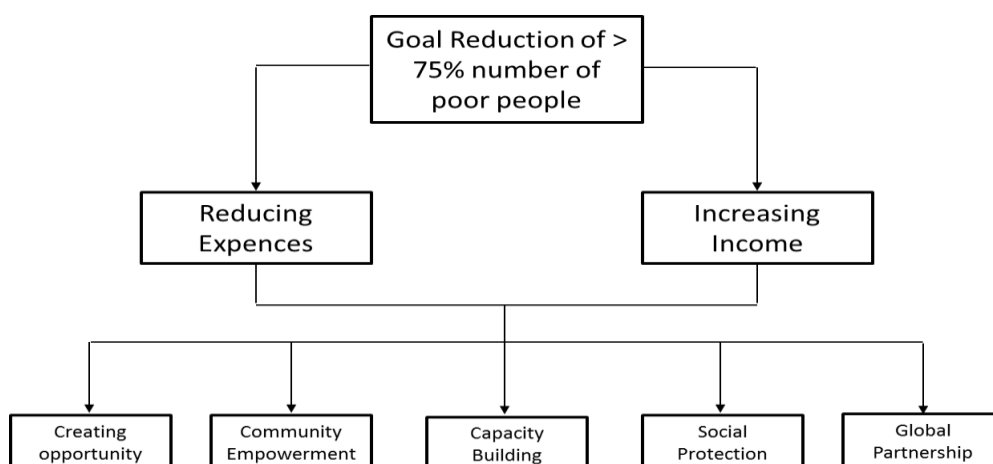
As a social phenomenon, poverty is not only experienced by developing countries but also in countries with steady economic growth (Waluyo, 2006). Poverty has prevented millions of children from receiving a quality education, difficulty in financing health care, lack of savings and no investment, lack of access to public services, lack of employment opportunities, lack of social security and protection for families, strengthening of urbanization flows to cities, and even the worse is that poverty causes millions of people barely unable to fulfill their food, clothing and housing needs (Prawoto, 2008).

The poor population in rural and urban communities generally work as farm laborers, smallholder farmers, small traders, fishermen, small craftsmen, laborers, street vendors, hawkers, scavengers, homeless and beggars, and unemployed. This poor group can cause ongoing problems for cultural and structural poverty if it is not managed seriously (Kadji, 2012).

Some variables can be used to track poverty issues. In terms of the education dimension, for example, low education is seen as a cause of poverty. Then, from the health dimension, the low quality of public health causes poverty. From the economic dimension, limited skills of productive tools, mastery of technology, and lack of skills are seen as the key causes of poverty.

The government has tried to integrate the various factors causing poverty and formulated a poverty reduction strategy that is outlined in the form of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (SNPK) document. This strategy holistically maps the existing poverty problem and focuses on five poverty reduction milestones (Waluyo, 2006), namely:

1. Creating job opportunities
2. Community empowerment
3. Capacity building
4. Social protection
5. Fostering global partnerships



Source: adapted from Waluyo (2006)

**Figure 1. Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Many poverty reduction programs have been implemented, both long-term and short-term programs. Long-term programs focus more on community empowerment efforts. Meanwhile, short-term programs are implemented

massively to help the target community meet the minimum basic standard of living (Waluyo, 2006). Community empowerment of fishermen has been implemented by the government for four decades, such as empowering small farmers and fishermen, credit or loans with soft interest, PEMP, Program MitraBahari, and Community-Based Environmental Management Program (Amanah&Farmayanti, 2011).

The empowerment program is implemented to improve the ability of the target community in the economic field to create community independence and prosperity (Moento et al., 2020). Empowerment is a concept of independence, participation, networking, and justice (Karunia, Haluan, Monintja, &Ratnawati, 2009).

### Methods

This study used a qualitative method. A qualitative study aims to understand the meaning of experience and social life (Fossey, Harvey, Mcdermott, & Davidson, 2002). The population of this study was fishermen groups in Bambalamotu Sub-district, Pasangkayu District with a total of 10 groups and each group consisted of 10 fishermen. Thus, the total number of fishermen was 100 people. The sample of this study was determined using the purposive sampling technique in which involved 10 representing each group. The use of the purposive sampling technique was based on certain considerations so that the selected sample knows the aims and objectives of the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Data were collected by observation, focus group discussion (FGD), interviews, and documentation. The data were then analyzed using an interactive approach consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

### Results and Discussion

Poverty will be a topic in various discussions and debates in the future as there has been an agreement to build the world by fighting poverty globally. A comprehensive and consistent policy is needed to combat poverty in various dimensions (Suryawati, 2005), especially fishermen poverty. Around 45% of the Indonesian people work as fishermen and the government needs to pay attention to the poverty faced by the fishing community (Nugroho&Pawestri, 2020).

The poverty in the fishing community is an irony considering that Indonesia has a very wide sea area, even wider than the land area. The sea also has various resources with high economic potential that should be utilized to ensure the welfare of fishermen and their families (Imron, 2003). The government's role is needed to increase the community empowerment of regular fishermen through various programs (Vibriyanti, 2016).

The government of Pasangkayu District, through the Department of Fisheries and Marine Affairs, has organized various empowerment programs for capture fishermen in the Bambalamotu sub-district. Some have the main livelihood of fishing activities and some others have fishing activities as additional activities to increase their income to support their lives and fulfill their needs. Community empowerment of fishing groups is not the same as other community empowerment as fishermen consisted of two groups, regular fishermen and sellers (who buy fish from fishermen). Thus, the empowerment program got this community should be designed in such a way and not generalize between one group and another, especially between one area and another. The empowerment should be bottom-up and the most important thing is that the empowerment must directly touch the fishing groups and have the right target.

The fishermen groups in Bambalamotu Village is traditional fishing groups as their fishing facilities and infrastructure are inadequate, ranging from boats or boats, fishing gear or nets, and other facilities such as social safety nets (JPS), for example, there are many fishermen which have not been recorded so that they are not included in the JPS beneficiary groups. These conditions cannot be separated from the efforts that have been done by the government to improve the welfare of fishermen groups, either through the provision of fishing equipment assistance, ease of access to capital, or empowerment programs to improve the welfare of fishermen groups. However, these programs did not have an appropriate target and the results obtained were not as expected.

In this study, the empowerment focuses on fishermen in Bambalamotu Village, Pasangkayu District. However, empowerment has not been seen in real as the fishermen groups in this village have not been formally empowered by the local government even though there are legal regulations. The study found that fishermen groups in Bambalamotu Village had inadequate knowledge and fishing equipment. The Department of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs has yet to act officially in empowering fishermen groups by providing technical guidance to fishing groups in this village. However, it has only visited and directed fishing groups, as well as donated boats to fishing groups. It

means that there is no assistance to fishermen. Assistance to fishing groups is also considered necessary, especially for traditional fishermen who on average have a low level of education (Vibriyanti, 2016).

The empowerment should provide knowledge and skills to fishermen, not just facilities as found in Babalamotu sub-district. The fishermen need programs that can improve their knowledge and skills. It is also found in Pangandaran sub-district, Ciamis district in which the empowerment programs including social assistance program for fishery businesses from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries is only financial assistance in the form of savings and loans in collaboration with banks (Sartika, 2012).

The empowerment program is not only limited to facilitating but also to increase the capacity of fishermen. Empowerment strategies used to improve the economy of fishermen's families cover strengthening fishermen's institutions, providing access to obtain capital, utilization of fishery technology, innovation, and marketing of processed fish products (Abd Rahim, 2018). System improvement and development of marketing access is one of the considerations for local government in the community empowerment of fishermen groups (Sipahelut, Wiryawan, & Nurani, 2011). The availability of fishing facilities and infrastructure is needed by the fishing community (Amanah & Farmayanti, 2011).

Wantah (2018) studied the community empowerment of fishermen based on economic education and coastal potential and found that more than 80 percent of fishermen need knowledge and understanding of entrepreneurship, business diversification, processing fish products, building business partnerships, establishing joint business groups, and access to business capital as well managing finances including budget allocation and procedures for saving.

The empowerment should not only provide fishing facilities as the results of previous studies indicate that fishermen want to increase knowledge in various ways to support their economy. For example, increasing knowledge to manage money, catches, access business capital, and others. It is in contrast with the field condition in which the related parties only provide facilities without training to increase the ability of fishermen in various aspects.

The conditions experienced by fishermen are very concerning as they are the key actor in fisheries management in Indonesia. Considering the increasing rate of population growth, so the land will be felt increasingly narrow, then working as a fisherman is expected to be the potential livelihood in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to empower fishermen by considering the potentials to increase their economy.

Many problems affecting the poverty of fishermen in Indonesia although Indonesian marine products can be relied on to improve the fishermen's economy. Besides the low ability or understanding of fishermen, the pandemic factor also becomes a major problem even though the poverty rate of fishermen remains high without the pandemic. The current condition is very concerning, as many fishermen do not work due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It happened because the marine products cannot be sold as before due to various government policies that prohibit many activities (Nugroho & Pawestri, 2020).

The problems faced by fishermen are very complex and they affect the poverty level of fishermen, especially in coastal communities (Moento et al., 2020). The results of this study can be a consideration for government to improve the welfare of the fishermen and to carry out the appropriate empowerment model. For fishermen, the current condition can be solved by forming a joint business group to increase the ability to manage their catches and market them for better economic conditions. For example, the fishing communities in Cirebon can improve their family's economy by establishing a joint business group. They collected capital voluntarily to form businesses that do not only focus on marine products, but also to open new business lines such as bicycle repair shops, beachside stalls, and other service businesses (Soeprijadi, Yuli, Susilo, & Rudianto, 2013).

### Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the community empowerment of fishermen has not been able to meet the expectations to improve the fishermen's economy. The empowerment does not go according to the wishes of fishermen to increase knowledge and ability to manage fish catches as the focus of stakeholders is only to provide boat and fishing equipment without providing training for improving the knowledge of the fishermen. Therefore, their economic condition remains low and finally affects the poverty level.

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