

Community Empowerment in Sea Product Management in Sasa Village as an Effort to Support a Sustainable Economy

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Abstract

This study aims to empower communities in Sasa Village in managing marine products as an effort to support a sustainable economy. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) method is used to actively involve the community in the process of identifying problems, planning, implementing, and evaluating empowerment programs. This study identified key problems, such as overfishing, limited market access, and limited skills in processing marine products. The solutions designed include training in environmentally friendly marine product management techniques, strengthening the capacity of fishermen, and forming joint business groups. The results of the study showed that this program succeeded in improving community skills in managing marine products, increasing awareness of sustainability, and having a positive impact on the local economy. Joint reflections by researchers and the community showed important lessons to overcome emerging challenges, such as limited environmentally friendly technology and business management. This program is expected to be a model of natural resource-based empowerment that can be applied in other coastal areas to support community welfare and a sustainable economy.

Keywords

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INTRODUCTION

Effective and sustainable management of marine products has enormous urgency, not only for the sustainability of marine ecosystems, but also for the economic welfare of coastal communities. The sea and the natural resources it contains, such as fish, coral reefs and various other marine species, are invaluable natural riches (JAUH, n.d.; Supriyono, 2020; Yapanto, 2021). However, if not managed wisely, these resources will quickly run out and damage the balance of the

ecosystem, which in turn will be detrimental to humans, especially those who depend on the sea as their main source of livelihood.

First, environmentally friendly management of marine products is very important to maintain the sustainability of marine ecosystems (Matriadi et al., 2023). The ocean is home to various species which have a vital role in maintaining natural balance. Coral reefs, for example, not only serve as habitat for thousands of marine species, but also act as natural barriers to coastal erosion. Fishing practices that are not environmentally friendly, such as using fishing gear that damages coral reefs or overfishing, can damage this vital marine ecosystem. If fishing activities and exploitation of marine products are not carried out wisely, ecosystem damage will threaten the sustainability of marine resources on which coastal communities depend.

Second, good management of marine products can support the economic improvement of coastal communities (Husain & Saleh, 2022). Many people depend on the fisheries sector for their livelihoods, both as fishermen, marine product processors and related business actors. However, problems such as lack of skills in seafood processing, limited market access, and low knowledge of environmentally friendly management technologies often hamper existing economic potential. Therefore, empowering communities to manage marine products sustainably with an approach that involves improving skills, processing value-added products, and wider market access will have a positive impact on their economic welfare.

Apart from that, sustainable management of seafood also contributes to national food security (Nurhayati, 2024; Sridadi et al., 2024). The sea is one of the main sources of food for most people, both in the form of fish and other sea products. To ensure a stable seafood supply, wise and sustainable management needs to be prioritized, considering the large demand for marine products, both for domestic consumption and export.

No less important, sustainable management of marine products also has a positive impact on the preservation of local culture which is closely related to maritime affairs (Afdhal, 2023; Susanti et al., 2023). Coastal communities in many areas have traditions and ways of life that are deeply rooted in marine resources. Management of marine products that pays attention to local wisdom and involves the community in planning and implementation will encourage their sense of responsibility in preserving the environment and ensure that future generations can still enjoy the same benefits.

Sasa Village, which is located on the coast, has abundant marine resource potential, but its management is often not optimal. Local communities, most of whom work as fishermen, face various challenges in managing marine products sustainably. Fishing practices that are not environmentally friendly, limited access to markets, and a lack of skills in processing marine products into value-added products are some of the main problems faced by the community. This not only has an impact on reducing the quality of the marine environment, but also hinders improving the welfare of coastal communities.

Community empowerment through sustainable management of marine products is an important step to overcome this problem. This empowerment does not only include increasing skills in processing marine products, but also introducing environmentally friendly natural resource management concepts, as well as building community capacity to access wider markets. For this reason, this community service program uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which prioritizes active community participation in every stage of activities.

Through this approach, it is hoped that the community will not only become beneficiaries, but also become subjects involved in designing and implementing solutions to the problems they face. This approach provides space for the community to participate in determining the direction of the program, so that the empowerment program implemented is more targeted and sustainable. One of the main objectives of this program is to support a sustainable economy in Sasa Village, by increasing the community's capacity to manage marine products more efficiently, environmentally friendly and profitable.

METHOD

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) method is used in this article as a relevant approach for community empowerment in managing marine products in Sasa Village (Siswadi & Syaifuddin, 2024). PAR prioritizes active collaboration between researchers and the community in the research process, with the aim of producing knowledge that is not only academic, but also useful for better social change. This method allows the community to participate in planning, implementing and analyzing actions taken in the context of empowerment and sustainable management of natural resources.

The first step in this research was identifying problems with the community in Sasa Village, which involved initial meetings with residents, fishing groups and other stakeholders. At this stage, researchers listened to the problems faced by the community related to marine product management, such as overfishing, lack of

market access, and lack of skills in processing marine products. This discussion process is very important to understand the community's perspective as well as build mutual trust between researchers and the community.

Once the problem is identified, the next stage is joint planning that actively involves the community. Researchers and residents work together to design empowerment programs that suit their needs. This plan includes various initiatives, such as training in environmentally friendly seafood management techniques, increasing the capacity of fishermen, and strengthening community-based economic institutions. In this planning, the researcher acts as a facilitator who helps the community in formulating clear and measurable goals.

The next stage is the implementation of actions carried out by the community with the assistance of researchers. This activity involves implementing agreed programs, such as skills training, creating joint business groups, and implementing technology that supports the sustainability of marine products. The community is not only an object of research, but also an active subject in implementing solutions that have been formulated together. Researchers play a role in ensuring that every action is carried out in accordance with sustainability principles and involves the community optimally.

During the implementation process, researchers and the community continuously carry out monitoring and evaluation. This assessment is carried out by collecting data related to the success or challenges faced in implementing the empowerment program. The community is involved in the process of reflection and discussion to evaluate what has been achieved and what needs to be improved. This allows for adjustments or changes in strategy so that empowerment programs can be more effective and targeted.

The process of joint reflection is an important part of PAR, where researchers and the community jointly analyze the results of the actions they have taken. This reflection aims to identify the lessons that have been obtained, both from the community and researchers' perspective. In the context of marine product management, this reflection includes an assessment of the economic, social and environmental impacts resulting from empowerment programs. This reflection becomes the basis for designing better follow-up steps in the future.

Finally, maintaining the sustainability of research results is the main focus. At this stage, the community is expected to be able to continue the empowerment program without relying completely on researchers or outside parties. Sustainability of marine product management in Sasa Village must involve the establishment of a

supporting system, such as independent management of business groups and increased access to wider markets. Researchers will provide final assistance in building community capacity to continue to develop this program in a sustainable manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community empowerment in managing marine products in Sasa Village is carried out through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach which involves the community directly in every stage of activities, from problem identification to program implementation and evaluation of results. This empowerment process aims to increase community capacity in managing marine resources in a sustainable way, as well as creating better economic opportunities for local communities.

Identification of Problems and Analysis of Community Needs

In the initial stage of service, researchers identify problems with the community. Group discussions involving fishermen, community leaders and local government representatives are a means of exploring the main problems faced in marine product management. The identification results show that one of the biggest challenges faced by the community is fishing practices that are not environmentally friendly, which threaten the sustainability of marine resources. Apart from that, the community also faces difficulties in accessing wider markets to sell their catches, as well as a lack of skills in processing marine products into value-added products.

Another problem found was a lack of awareness of the importance of sustainable management of marine products. Many fishermen still use fishing methods that damage coral reefs and other marine environments, which could risk reducing fish catches in the future. Therefore, it is important to provide the public with an understanding of the importance of conserving marine resources, as well as equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to manage marine products effectively and in an environmentally friendly manner.

Joint Planning and Preparation of Empowerment Programs

Once problems are identified, researchers and communities work together to design empowerment programs that suit their needs. This planning process involves discussion and deliberation to determine the steps to be taken to overcome existing problems. One of the main programs designed is training on environmentally friendly fishing techniques, as well as the use of fishing gear that is more efficient and does not damage the marine ecosystem.

Apart from that, the public is also invited to design strategies to increase the added value of marine products. One of the agreed initiatives is processing fish into processed products, such as salted fish, grilled fish, or other processed products that are more durable and have a higher selling price. This program also involves strengthening the capacity of fishermen's joint business groups (KUB) in Sasa Village, where the community is given training on business management, product packaging and marketing.

By involving the community in every planning stage, they not only have a sense of responsibility for the success of the program, but also feel they have control over the ongoing empowerment process. This is very important to ensure the sustainability of the program in the future, considering the active role of the community in designing and implementing empowerment programs.

Program Implementation and Mentoring

Implementation of the empowerment program begins with training in environmentally friendly fishing techniques. This training is carried out by experts in the marine and fisheries sector who have experience in sustainable management of marine resources. The community is directly involved in field practice, where they are taught fishing methods that do not damage coral reefs and maintain the balance of the marine ecosystem. By introducing environmentally friendly fishing methods, it is hoped that the community can maintain optimal catches without damaging the sustainability of marine resources.

Apart from training in fishing techniques, the empowerment program also includes training on processing marine products into value-added products. The public is given knowledge about various fish processing techniques, such as preserving fish in an environmentally friendly way, making salted fish, and processing other marine products. This training aims to increase the competitiveness of Sasa Village's marine products in the wider market, as well as increasing community income.

Apart from that, fishermen's joint business groups (KUB) are also given training on business management, from business planning, financial management, to product marketing. Through this training, it is hoped that people will be able to manage their businesses more professionally and efficiently, and be able to access a wider market to market their products. Apart from that, the community is also guided in creating effective marketing strategies, including the use of social media to introduce seafood products to consumers outside Sasa Village.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

During program implementation, researchers and the community actively carry out monitoring and evaluation to measure the extent to which the empowerment program has achieved the desired goals. At this stage, the community is involved in a reflection and discussion process to evaluate the success of the program, the challenges faced, and things that need to be improved. From the results of the initial evaluation, many training participants were satisfied with the increase in skills they had acquired, both in terms of more environmentally friendly fishing techniques and marine product processing.

However, the challenge that arises is the lack of public access to more modern technology, such as more efficient and environmentally friendly fishing gear. Some fishermen who were initially skeptical of the new method found it difficult to implement the techniques taught without adequate equipment support. Therefore, further efforts are needed to provide access to more environmentally friendly fishing gear and support the sustainability of this empowerment program.

The evaluation also shows that the joint business group (KUB) that has been formed shows positive developments in terms of improving managerial skills and product marketing. Society is starting to develop a wider market and penetrate the online market, which was previously unimaginable. However, there are still several challenges in terms of financial management and marketing, which need to be encouraged further through more intensive training and mentoring.

Reflection and Shared Learning

At the end of the program, a joint reflection was carried out between researchers and the community to evaluate the impact of this empowerment program. The results of the reflection show that people are starting to realize the importance of sustainable management of marine products, as well as the benefits that can be obtained by processing marine products to make them more valuable. Communities are also starting to develop a sense of mutual trust and cooperation in joint business groups, which has the potential to improve their welfare.

One of the main lessons from this program is the importance of community involvement from the start in planning and implementing empowerment programs. With active involvement, the community feels more ownership and responsibility for the success of the program, thus encouraging the sustainability and development of the initiative. In addition, this program shows that community empowerment is not only about providing training, but also involving them in decision making and a continuous reflection process.

Sustainability of Empowerment Program

As an effort to ensure the sustainability of the program, the community is expected to continue managing marine products sustainably and independently. The formation of joint business groups and strengthening managerial capacity is the key to ensuring that Sasa Village's seafood products can be marketed well, and provide sustainable benefits for the community. The researcher acts as a facilitator who provides final assistance, with the hope that the community can develop their business without relying completely on outside parties.

The sustainability of this program also depends on the community's ability to access the resources needed, such as business capital, environmentally friendly technology and a wider market. Therefore, there needs to be support from the government, financial institutions and other community organizations to support the development of marine product-based businesses in Sasa Village.

CONCLUSION

The community empowerment program in managing marine products in Sasa Village, which was implemented through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, succeeded in achieving the goal of increasing community capacity in managing marine resources sustainably. Through training in environmentally friendly fishing techniques and processing of value-added marine products, communities not only gain new skills but also awareness of the importance of sustainability of natural resources for a better future.

The implementation of this program shows that community involvement from the start in planning and implementation is very important to ensure the success and sustainability of empowerment programs. By working together to design solutions to the problems they face, communities become more responsible for the success of the program, and feel empowered in making decisions that affect their well-being.

Even though challenges still exist, such as lack of access to environmentally friendly technology and difficulties in business management, the positive impacts obtained in terms of improving skills, processing seafood and marketing products are a good first step for sustainable economic development in Sasa Village. It is hoped that the joint business group formed can become the foundation for the sustainability of this program, with further support from various parties, such as the government and financial institutions.

Thus, this community empowerment program can be used as a model for natural resource-based empowerment efforts in other coastal areas. It is hoped that the success of sustainable management of marine products in Sasa Village will

improve the welfare of coastal communities, improve their quality of life, and encourage an environmentally friendly natural resource-based economy.

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