

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY IN ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BASED ON LOCAL POTENTIAL IN SUKOREJO VILLAGE

Choirun Nisak<sup>1</sup>, Daryono<sup>2</sup>, Suchaina<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Master of Economics Education Study Program, Economic of Faculty, PGRI Wiranegara University, East Java, Indonesia

Email Coressponding: [choirunn0707@gmail.com](mailto:choirunn0707@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Sustainable Development at the Village level requires the active involvement of the community as a subject as well as the main actor of development. Sukorejo Village has a variety of local potential, both natural, social, cultural and economic resources which if managed optimally can be a force in improving the welfare of the community. However, the utilization of this potential will not run effectively without a community empowerment strategy that is able to encourage active and sustainable participation. This study aims to analyze community empowerment strategies in encouraging participation in sustainable development based on local potential in Sukorejo Village, Pohjentrek District, Pasuruan Regency. This research uses a qualitative (in-depth interviews with village officials, community leaders, and local business actors) approach with a case study method to obtain a comprehensive picture of the process, dynamics, and impacts of the community empowerment program implemented. Community empowerment in Sukorejo Village focuses on developing local potential in the fields of handicrafts, agriculture, and culture as the main driver of a sustainable creative economy. The strategy has been proven to be able to increase independence, active participation, and public awareness of the importance of development that is oriented towards a balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects. In relation to Sustainable Development, Sukorejo Village has shared local potential that supports the achievement of SGG 8 in local resource-based economic development, SDG 4 in strengthening community capacity.

**Keywords:** Community Empowerment, Local Potential, Participation, Sukorejo Village, Sustainable Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is one of the important ways to overcome the problem of poverty and also encourage participation so that the community is active in sustainable development. This approach is bottom-up, because the community is placed as the main actors of development who have self-help, independence, and the ability to manage their potential. According to Mardikanto and Soebianto (2015:26), empowerment is one of the pillars in the World Bank's three-pronged strategy in efforts to alleviate poverty. This shows that community empowerment is not only limited to social activities, but also a development strategy that emphasizes capacity building, independence, and sustainability. Theoretically, Dibyo (2019) explained that community empowerment aims to help individuals or groups gain power in making decisions and determining actions related to their lives, including in overcoming social and economic barriers. Empowerment is basically the process of enabling individuals or communities to be able to stand on their own strength. In line with the opinion of Hermawan (2016), empowerment is closely related to personal independence and the power to control life. Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Village Government also emphasizes that empowerment is an effort to improve the ability of village communities to access resources, determine policies, and improve their standard of living.

In the context of rural development, community empowerment is very important considering that most of the social and economic problems, such as poverty and limited resources, are still found in rural areas. According to Widayanti (2012), community empowerment is an approach that focuses on efforts to overcome social problems collaboratively, involving various parties such as the government, the business world, civil society, and universities. Through empowerment based on local potential, villages can explore and utilize their resources to improve the welfare of their communities in a sustainable manner. Sukorejo Village as one of the villages that has local potential in the fields of agriculture, handicrafts, and small and medium enterprises, has a great opportunity in developing sustainable community empowerment programs. The development of local potential can be a strategy in encouraging active community participation in development, by fostering a sense of ownership of village programs and strengthening collaboration between the community and the village government. Empowerment based on local potential is expected to be able to create economic independence for the community and open up new job opportunities, so as to have a direct impact on improving social welfare.

Hajar et al. (2018) emphasized that community participation in empowerment can improve the ability of individuals and groups in decision-making, implementation of activities, and maintenance of development results. Therefore, the community empowerment strategy in Sukorejo Village must be designed by paying attention to the characteristics, needs, and local potentials that they have. By prioritizing participatory, collaborative, and sustainable principles, it is hoped that development in Sukorejo Village will not only produce economic progress, but also strengthen social and environmental aspects as a tangible manifestation of community-based sustainable development. Empowerment has several goals that want to be achieved in achieving social change, namely creating a more empowered society, having knowledge, power and ability in the process of fulfilling life needs both physical, economic and social

which are able to increase confidence, deliver inspiration, have a livelihood, always be active in social-related activities and be independent when carrying out life tasks.

The concept of sustainable development emphasizes the balance between economic, social, and environmental aspects. Hannan and Rahmawati (2020) define sustainable development as a development process that not only focuses on economic growth, but also pays attention to the sustainability of natural resources and intergenerational welfare. Mukhlis (2009) added that sustainability can be achieved if communities are empowered to manage natural resources wisely and fairly. In the context of rural areas, sustainable development means creating an independent economic system, preserving the environment, and strengthening the socio-cultural values of the community. Therefore, the community empowerment strategy must be aligned with these sustainability principles. Local potential is all natural, human, social, and cultural resources owned by an area that can be developed to improve the welfare of the community. According to Bahua (2018), the development of local potential is the main foundation in community empowerment because it is able to foster a sense of belonging and strengthen regional identity. In Sukorejo Village, local potential includes the agricultural sector, handicrafts, and cultural traditions such as "Besaran" activities. These potentials are important social and economic capital in village development. Yuliani and Pratama (2023) emphasized that the strategy for developing local potential in the modern era needs to be accompanied by innovation, mentoring, and digitalization so that local products and services are able to compete at the regional and national levels.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. The selection of this approach is based on the objectives of the research that seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the processes, strategies, and dynamics of community empowerment in the context of sustainable development at the local level. The focus of the research is directed to reveal the empowerment strategies carried out to encourage active community participation in sustainable development based on local potential in Sukorejo Village. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon holistically, contextually, and comprehensively, taking into account the perspective of *sustainable development* which includes social, economic, and environmental aspects.

The data sources in this study were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document reviews relevant to the research theme. Interviews were conducted with various parties who were considered to have a direct connection to empowerment activities, such as village officials, community leaders, and local business actors. Observations are carried out in a participatory manner to get a real picture of empowerment activities and community participation in development. Meanwhile, document review is used to trace policies, activity reports, and other supporting data related to development programs in Sukorejo Village. The data examined in the document from the Village is a 5-year data report from 2019-2024.

The data analysis technique in this study uses an interactive analysis model which includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994). The data reduction

process is carried out to select, simplify, and focus data that is relevant to the research problem. The reduced data is then presented in the form of a narrative description to make it easier for researchers to understand patterns and relationships between variables. The last stage is the drawing of conclusions that are carried out reflexively and repeatedly, so that the results of the research can accurately and in-depth describe the empirical reality.

Thus, through these methods and approaches, this research is expected to make a conceptual and practical contribution to the development of local potential-based community empowerment strategies that are in line with the principles of sustainable development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community empowerment in Sukorejo Village is one of the main strategies in encouraging increased community participation towards sustainable development based on local potential. The concept of empowerment in this village emphasizes the process of providing power, opportunities, and abilities to the community to be able to manage their resources independently. This provides positive value in improving the standard of living and welfare of the village community. Through empowerment, the community is encouraged to play an active role in every stage of development, starting from planning, implementation, to evaluating activities. This is in line with the opinion of Mardikanto and Soebianto (2015) who stated that empowerment is a process of strengthening people to have the ability and independence in determining the direction of their lives. In the context of Sukorejo Village, this effort is realized through the development of the creative economy, agriculture, and local cultural preservation sectors that have the potential to strengthen the community's economy while maintaining village identity. In essence, community empowerment aims to raise awareness of one's potential and provide encouragement to develop one's abilities. Empowerment in Sukorejo Village is oriented towards creating a community that is empowered in meeting its needs socially, economically, and environmentally. Efforts to explore the local potential of villages such as agriculture, MSMEs, and handicrafts are a strategic step to increase community productivity and create new jobs Mardikanto, T., & Soebiato, P. (2017). This has a direct impact on better and more equitable socio-economic change Anwas, O. M. (2014).

The creative economy sector in Sukorejo Village has great potential that can be developed as the main pillar of community empowerment. One of the home industries that is growing rapidly is embroidery, knitting, furniture, as well as the production of hajib kopyah and thread embroidery. Data states that in 2024 there will be an increase of 10% in the home industry. In line with the increase in home in-house, it is in line with production that is driven by market demand. This has led to a shift in labor absorption that involves a lot of local workers, especially women, who use traditional skills to increase family income. Empowerment in this sector is carried out through skills training, business assistance, to assistance in accessing capital and marketing. According to Widayanti (2012), community empowerment is one of the effective approaches in overcoming social and economic problems if implemented collaboratively between the government, the business world, and the community. Thus, strengthening the capacity of small business actors in Sukorejo can create sustainable economic independence and reduce dependence on external parties. In

addition, local products such as embroidery and kopyah hajj also have the potential to be marketed to the regional and even national levels as part of the development of a creative economy based on local potential.

In addition to the creative economy sector, the agricultural sector is still one of the backbones of the lives of the people of Sukorejo Village. The application of legowo rice cultivation techniques by the Duyo Makmur Farmers Group is a form of innovation resulting from community empowerment in the agricultural sector. The legowo alignment technique is applied by the Duyo Makmur farmer group, namely by innovating the planting arrangement which aims to increase rice productivity, improve plant ventilation, and facilitate maintenance. This shows that the knowledge and application of this technique has increased after counseling and assistance by field extension workers. This proves the importance of knowledge transfer in empowering agricultural communities. In line with the opinion of Hajar et al. (2018), the active participation of the community in empowerment activities can increase the ability, productivity, and independence of the community in the long term. Therefore, the empowerment of the agricultural sector in Sukorejo needs to continue to be improved through environmentally friendly technology training, the establishment of farmer cooperatives, and village policy support that is in favor of farmers. This strategy will create a sustainable farming system that is not only economically profitable, but also preserves the environment.

Cultural potential is also one of the main strengths in empowering the people of Sukorejo Village. The Besaran tradition, which is celebrated every Eid al-Adha, is a hereditary tradition that reflects the values of mutual cooperation, solidarity, and togetherness. In this tradition, each house prepares special dishes such as sticky rice tape to welcome relatives and guests from outside the area. The tradition of mutual cooperation and community service is also a culture that is still strong in activities in Sukorejo Village, such as road repairs, irrigation canals to the preparation of religious events. In addition, the culture of deliberation and local institutions is also a strong social cultural heritage such as village deliberations, village deliberations and farmer group meetings/PKK. This cultural potential becomes social capital for village development programs and also supports inclusive and equitable empowerment programs (Utami, R, & Handayani T, 2019).

This cultural potential not only has social value, but can also be developed into a tourist attraction based on local wisdom. With good management, the Besaran tradition can be raised into an annual cultural agenda that involves all levels of society and has an economic impact on culinary and craft business actors. According to Bahua (2018), community participation in the management of local potential such as culture and tradition will foster a sense of belonging and strengthen the community's position as the subject of development, not the object. This proves that culture-based empowerment strategies can be an effective means of building a competitive local identity while strengthening the foundations of sustainable development in villages.

Overall, the results of community empowerment in Sukorejo Village show an increase. From the results of in-depth interviews and descriptively studied data, community participation in Sukorejo Village runs in various fields of life. The home industry that is increasing along with the absorption of labor, especially women, indicates that community empowerment is underway. Optimizing local potential, such as the handicrafts, agriculture, and culture sectors, the community is increasingly aware of the importance of collaboration and independence in building villages. This is in line with the principle of sustainable development which emphasizes a balance

between economic, social, and environmental aspects. Hannan and Rahmawati (2020) emphasized that sustainable development can only be achieved if the community becomes the main actor in resource management and has awareness of intergenerational sustainability. Therefore, the empowerment strategy in Sukorejo Village needs to continue to be directed at strengthening community capacity, sustainable development, and integrating local potential with village development policies. Thus, Sukorejo Village can be an example of the implementation of community empowerment-based development oriented towards welfare, independence, and environmental sustainability. The success of community empowerment-based development also depends heavily on the level of community participation itself. The village government has an important role in understanding the social and economic conditions of the community so that it is able to establish synergistic cooperation in the implementation of development programs. In line with the views of Hannan and Rahmawati (2020), sustainable development emphasizes resource optimization by paying attention to environmental sustainability. This is also supported by Mukhlis (2009) who emphasizes the importance of sustainable management of natural resources between generations to maintain ecosystem balance and improve sustainable welfare. The community empowerment strategy in Sukorejo Village as a whole has been proven to increase the active participation of the community in sustainable development. By placing the community as the main actor and optimizing the local potential, development not only provides economic results, but also strengthens social and environmental aspects. This model is expected to be an example of independent, competitive, and sustainable village development.

This community empowerment-based development has several important advantages, including: (1) fostering awareness of community participation in development; (2) the application of appropriate technology; (3) strengthening the principles of social justice and sustainability; and (4) increasing awareness of the importance of collaboration between elements of society. The empowerment strategy implemented in Sukorejo Village emphasizes the principle of sustainability, with steps such as determining program priorities, opening access to resources and networks, and strengthening togetherness in the ownership and management of production products. The community is positioned as the subject of development, not just the object of the beneficiary. This research has a practical impact that explains that the potential of local culture can be used as strategic capital in the planning and implementation of village development programs. The tradition of mutual cooperation, community service, and local institutions such as farmer groups and PKK can be used as existing social media. This study also implies the need for stakeholders to pay attention to local culture in formulating village development policies and the policy of implementing Button-Up that accommodates local values so that empowerment programs can be accepted and implemented in a positive manner.

## CONCLUSION

Community empowerment in Sukorejo Village has proven to be a very effective strategy in increasing participation, independence, and community awareness of the importance of sustainable development. Through optimizing local potentials such as the handicrafts, agriculture, and cultural sectors, the community is not only able to develop the creative economy, but also strengthen social ties, a sense of mutual cooperation, and solidarity between citizens. This empowerment creates a positive

social transformation, where the community plays an active role as a subject of development, not just a beneficiary object. Various programs such as skills training, small business assistance, and human resource capacity building are strategic steps to strengthen the economic independence of village communities. In addition, agricultural extension activities and environment-based natural resource management also contribute to maintaining the sustainability of the village ecosystem.

The village government plays an important role as a facilitator and mediator who bridges cross-sector cooperation between the community, government institutions, the business world, and universities, in order to create an inclusive and long-term oriented development synergy, thus, community empowerment based on local potential in Sukorejo Village not only has an impact on improving economic welfare, but also strengthens social, cultural values, and the environment which is the main foundation of sustainable development. This empowerment model shows that the success of village development will be achieved if the community is actively involved in the entire process, from planning to evaluation. In the future, a similar approach can be used as an example for other villages in implementing independent, competitive, and socially equitable development.

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