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# Strategies for Empowering Fisherfolk in Efforts to Alleviate Poverty in the Fishing Village of Tungkal Ilir District, West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

The empowerment of fishing communities is an effort to improve well-being and alleviate poverty among coastal populations. This study aims to analyze empowerment strategies for fishers, as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder poverty alleviation in Tungkal Ilir District, West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi. he research approach employed was qualitative, with data collection conducted through interviews and document searches. The findings indicate that empowerment strategies include enhancing productivity, developing the capacities of fishers, utilizing the KUSUKA (Fisher/Marine and Aquaculture Business Actor) card, providing insurance assistance, and strengthening cooperatives. The implementation of these strategies requires government support, training, mentorship, and continuous evaluation. Such empowerment is expected to foster self-reliance, improve economic conditions, and achieve sustainable well-being for fishing communities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is a strategy rooted in a concept that positions the community as the subject designed to help the community become empowered (Endah & Galuh, 2020). This implies that the granting of agency is not limited to the disadvantaged, but can also be extended to those whose capabilities or opportunities remain constrained. Persistent disparities manifest as social problems, which all stakeholders strive to eradicate. Issues such as underdevelopment, social isolation, and societal backwardness require focused attention to facilitate their resolution.

On one hand, these reasons are quite well-founded, as a large portion of the population in the region still faces significant limitations (Nadir, 2013). Unresolved obstacles within a society can hinder the process of creating a prosperous community. Therefore, it is essential to empower or increase the agency of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, enabling them to break free from the shackles of poverty (Ernie Dwi Astuti and Utsman, 2021). In this way, it is hoped that these individuals will have greater opportunities to utilize available resources and escape poverty.

The commitment to improving public welfare is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Article 27, paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution stipulates that the state has an obligation to regulate and implement a system for managing natural resources and the economy based on the principles of social justice, with the goal of achieving welfare for all the people of Indonesia. Furthermore, Article 34, paragraph (2) asserts that the government shall strive to create employment opportunities and enhance the welfare of the people. Thus, the 1945 Constitution emphasizes the state's responsibility toward public welfare through the management of resources and the expansion of employment opportunities.

According to Ryaas Rasid, the four functions of government encompass regulation, service provision, law enforcement, and nation-building (Labolo, 2013). The purpose of carrying out an organizational function in any of its various forms—is to establish appropriate conditions. To facilitate individuals in pursuing their preferred activities and to foster a more harmonious social order, it is necessary to improve conditions across all aspects of life. The service function ensures the upholding of justice within society. The empowerment function is crucial, as it encourages self-reliance among the public, while the development function contributes to the creation of societal well-being (Malumbot, 2015).

Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government is a policy considered to be in line with the needs of the regions (Qodir, 2020). The central government delegates general affairs to regional governments, tailored to the specific conditions and capacities of each autonomous region within the framework of decentralization. An examination of the relevant legislation reveals that the central government provides certain incentives.

These regional governments play a central role in local governance, fostering further development and consolidation. According to Smith, an increase in regional autonomy can lead to a greater concentration of power among local bureaucrats and politicians (Aminah, 2016). Although the process is

not without its challenges, regional governments recognize the necessity of strengthening national unity. This approach serves to fortify the nation by encouraging regions to reach their full potential, thereby ensuring the prosperity of the population and the eradication of poverty.

Poverty is a recurring subject of public discourse and, consequently, a key concern in the context of development. Furthermore, various parties use poverty as an indicator to gauge the success or failure of development efforts. Mulyadi (as cited in Ernie Dwi Astuti and Utsman, 2021) notes that poverty is often viewed strictly from an economic perspective defined as a situation or condition in which an individual or a group lacks material possessions or earns an income below a specific threshold. (Efenddi, 2018) explains that there are several underlying causes that make it difficult to reduce the prevalence of poverty.

First, there is the issue of a population that does not participate in the quality assurance process for production factors. Second, the education level in rural areas is low. Third, government-planned development often fails to align with the community's capacity for participation, rendering such initiatives beyond the reach of the people. If left unaddressed, these conditions will cause the economic opportunities outlined in the plans to go to waste (Masihuri Imron, 2003). Community empowerment, which aims to enhance capacity, serves as a vital step toward combating poverty and underdevelopment.

According to World Bank poverty data (2015), 121.76 million people or 46 percent of Indonesia's total population live in poverty or are at risk of falling into poverty. Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2015), drawing on various World Bank calculations, reports that 35.83 million people (15.27 percent of the population) in Indonesia are living in poverty. This figure is based on a poverty line set at $1.55. The majority (62.52 percent) of Indonesia's poor population reside in coastal and rural areas (BPS, 2015). Given the substantial number of people living in poverty as noted above, it is clear that a very large segment of the population remains impoverished.

With the growing population and increasing density particularly within regency areas people now have their own reasons for being drawn to these urban centers. In general, as regional hubs, these cities offer ready access to a wide range of essentials, including services, educational opportunities, promising employment prospects, and sustainable economic growth. The urban population tends to rise significantly each year, driven by high rates of urbanization (Suarlin, 2021). High population density has also led to an annual increase in poverty rates. This is due to several factors, such as low levels of formal education, a lack of professional skills, and limited technological literacy, all of which make it difficult for individuals to escape poverty.

Issues such as limited capital, a lack of knowledge, and overfishing are frequently cited as causes of poverty or low living standards among fishing communities (Imron, 2006; 2011, as cited in M. Ali Hamedi, 2012). According to Mudrajad (2006, as cited in Randy Romario et al., 2017), "micro-poverty" arises from an unequal pattern of resource ownership, which in turn leads to an uneven distribution of income.

The challenges present in fishing villages, as outlined above, suggest a potential for relatively high levels of poverty within these communities. Given the large number of fishers in the region, there remains a significant need for support specifically in the form of assistance for basic necessities and fishing equipment to sustain the activities of the fishing community.

This situation demonstrates that a significant number of impoverished fishing communities still exist in the region. The failure to lift these fishing communities above the poverty line is, in part, a responsibility that falls upon local politicians. This state of affairs is influenced by factors such as limited human resource capacity, a weak local economy, and a lack of necessary institutional support.

The objective of this paper is to analyze and describe strategies for the empowerment of fishers as a means of poverty alleviation in the fishing villages of Tungkal Ilir District, West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi. Furthermore, it aims to analyze and describe the enabling factors and disincentives affecting these empowerment strategies in the context of poverty reduction efforts within the same area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis helps outline an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats it faces from the external environment. This method facilitates the systematic identification of these factors. The approach is based on the premise that an effective strategy optimizes the utilization of strengths and opportunities while minimizing the impact of weaknesses and threats. SWOT analysis not only reveals a company's existing competencies, capabilities, and resources but also identifies opportunities that remain untapped due to resource constraints.

### community empowerment

Empowerment is a process of "becoming," rather than an "institutional process." As a process, empowerment consists of three phases: awareness, capacity building, and empowerment itself (Randy R. et al., 2007). Furthermore, empowerment is not merely a theory; as Ron Johnson and David Redmode argue in *The Art of Empowerment* (1992), it is, ultimately, an art—one rooted in the values we hold. When empowerment is approached as both a practice and an art, it offers guidance on how to manage the empowerment process. This means that empowerment should not entail "robotization" or "standardization." Instead, it provides space for the development of a diverse range of human capabilities, provided that these capabilities complement one another. Empowerment is a natural process.

### Fishing Community

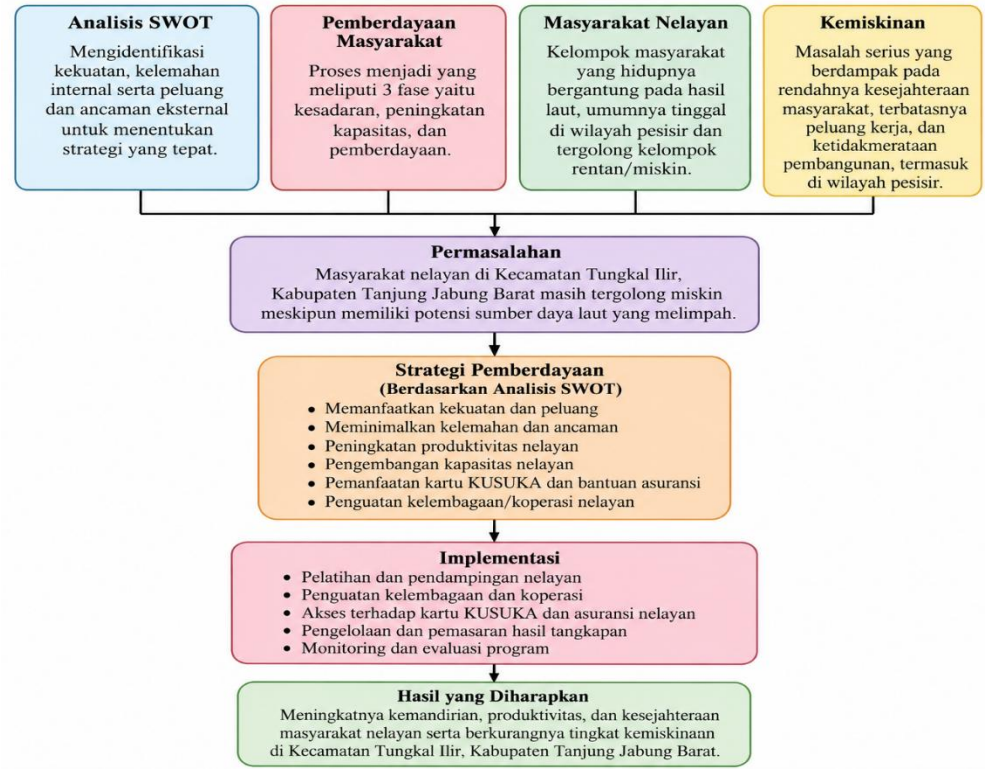
are a segment of society whose livelihoods depend directly on marine resources, whether through fishing or aquaculture. They typically reside along the coast, in settlements situated close to their areas of activity. Several sources identify fisherfolk as a socioeconomically disadvantaged group (Mubyarto, 1984; Imron, 2001; Masykhuri, 1999; Kusnadi, 2002). Specifically, Retno and Santiasi

(1993: 137) note that, when compared to populations in agricultural zones, fisherfolk particularly fishery laborers and traditional fishers can be classified as belonging to a very poor social stratum, although it cannot be said that all fisherfolk are poor (Masykhuri Imron, 2003).

Poverty

The issue of poverty remains a serious problem in Indonesia. Poverty levels are significant not only among the rural population but also in urban areas. High poverty rates in Indonesia have contributed to various security concerns, such as an increase in criminal acts including theft, robbery, sexual assault, and even murder. The government continues to face challenges in addressing the root causes of poverty, such as limited employment opportunities which lead to high unemployment rates the year-on-year rise in urbanization, and development policies that remain uneven across regions and fail to fully account for marginalized groups, such as the poor.

**Table 3.1**
**Conceptual Framework**




## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach, as described by Waruwu (2023). This approach was chosen because the data is presented based on the informants' perspectives and experiences and is used to examine naturally occurring phenomena. The research process was conducted by adjusting the focus and formulation of the problem, then analyzing it to understand the background of the informants' actions, including their ways of thinking, attitudes, and behavior. Furthermore, the obtained data was selected and simplified through a reduction

process, before finally being interpreted and conclusions drawn by the researcher

## RESEARCH RESULT

The empowerment of fishers can be understood as an effort to strengthen and enhance the quality of fisheries resources in order to optimize marine potential. By improving the quality of these resources, the well-being of fishing communities can be elevated. To this day, fishing communities living in coastal areas remain a marginalized and impoverished group far from prosperous. A striking aspect of their situation is that they continue to be gripped by poverty, even though marine natural resources are abundant.

Consider a fishing village that possesses diverse maritime potential and is rich in fishery resources. Yet, the inability of the fishing community to rise above the poverty line remains a critical issue one that also falls under the responsibility of relevant stakeholders. This situation is driven by factors such as limited human resource capacity, a weak local economy, and a lack of necessary institutional support. Empowering fishers requires data on their existing capacities, which can then be used to develop targeted interventions. Ultimately, the goal is for marginalized fishing communities to gain the strength and agency they currently lack.

Consequently, those who previously lacked the ability to manage resources effectively will become capable of doing so, and these highly promising fishers will grow more productive. In the long run, this will at least provide strength to marginalized fishing communities. Furthermore, it addresses the challenges of a weak economy and the need for institutional support. Empowering fishers requires data on their existing capacities, which can then be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at their empowerment.

## DISCUSSION

Environmental scanning involves monitoring, evaluating, and gathering information from both the external and internal environments for key decision-makers within an organization. Its purpose is to identify the external and internal strategic factors that will shape the organization's future. Typically, strategy development begins with a situational analysis to find a alignment between external opportunities and internal strengths, as well as to address internal threats.

The implementation involves three key areas. First, the empowerment of fishers, with the goal of enhancing the self-reliance of small-scale fishers in their operations. Second, capacity building for small-scale fishers, aimed at improving sustainability and fostering a better understanding of fisher insurance systems and the KUSUKA (Fisher Business/Identity) card. Third, the execution of measures to encourage the establishment and development of small-scale fisher institutions, thereby increasing the number of independent fisher community groups. Consequently, only a portion of the fisher community participates in these empowerment programs.

Assistance is provided to support individuals and groups tailored to their specific needs and capabilities by facilitating processes of interaction and communication. This is carried out in the "Fisher Village" (Desa Nelayan) of West

Tanjung Jabung Regency through a program focused on fostering the formation and development of small-scale fisher institutions, with participants receiving advanced training, fisher insurance coverage, and KUSUKA cards.

The operation of KUSUKA is integrated into the "KKP One Data" (KKP Satu Data) system, utilizing the *satudata.kkp.go.id* application, which includes modules for the registration of both individuals and companies under KUSUKA. Currently, there are 5,700 fisheries extension officers across Indonesia, supported by 514 KKP regency/city offices and 139 KKP technical implementation units (UPT) that facilitate the submission of registration data into the KUSUKA modules. Once registered as a business entity (Pelaku Usaha), the applicant will undergo a data verification process conducted by the Planning Bureau under the KKP Secretariat General; this verification covers both the general section (in accordance with the PCT attachment) and the specific section (following the PCT logic).

Once the infrastructure data has been confirmed and validated, the Data and Information Center of the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (Pusdatin KKP) will submit a request for card issuance to the partner bank—in this case, Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI) to enable marine and fisheries business entities to access banking services. For entities whose cards are issued by BNI, this includes opening an account with a zero-rupiah balance, with no card maintenance or administrative fees (i.e., these services are free of charge). By the end of July 2018, a total of 292,074 records had been entered into the application, comprising: 127,804 fishers, 10,344 fish traders, 30 fisheries service providers (PPJK), 132,390 fish farmers, 16,010 fish processors, and 5,450 salt producers.

Developing cooperative partnerships can be highly beneficial in strengthening the bargaining power of fishers. The steps that can be taken to foster such cooperation are as follows:

Education and Training: Begin by educating and training fishers on the benefits of cooperatives, how to establish and manage them, and the relevant legal aspects.

Organization: Assist fishers in forming cooperatives or working groups. These cooperatives can serve as a platform for sharing knowledge, resources, and business opportunities. Developing a Shared Vision: Help cooperative members develop a common vision and set of goals. This will help channel their collective efforts and strengthen solidarity among the fishers.

Resource Management: Cooperatives can assist fishers in procuring resources such as equipment, fuel, and boats. By purchasing collectively, they can secure better prices.

Collective Marketing: Cooperatives can consolidate the catches from various fishers and sell them together. This provides a stronger bargaining position when negotiating with buyers.

In the fishing village district of West Tanjung Jabung Regency, the empowerment of fishers allows for the evaluation and monitoring of strategies designed to support the fishing community—a crucial process for ensuring the effectiveness of such empowerment efforts. Evaluation entails assessing the achievement of objectives, the overall impact, and the effectiveness of the

implemented strategies. Meanwhile, control involves continuous monitoring and the adjustment of the measures being taken.

Based on the discussion above, the empowerment of the fishing community in Tungkal Ilir District, West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi, serves as a crucial effort to alleviate poverty and improve the well-being of fishers. According to a SWOT analysis, priority strategies should include enhancing fisher productivity, developing capacity, and establishing or strengthening fisher institutions. These initiatives can be implemented through training, the provision of insurance, the utilization of KUSUKA (Fisher/Fish Cultivator/Salt Farmer) cards, and ongoing mentorship to foster greater self-reliance in the fishers' business operations.

Furthermore, fostering cooperation such as through cooperatives is essential to strengthen the fishers' bargaining power, facilitate access to necessary business resources, and improve the marketing of their catch. To ensure the effectiveness of these empowerment programs, the government and relevant stakeholders must conduct continuous monitoring and evaluation. Through such collaboration, mentorship, and the implementation of well-targeted programs, it is expected that the well-being of the fishing community will improve, reliance on external aid will decrease, and the lives of the fishers will become more self-reliant and sustainable.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The empowerment of fishing communities in Tungkal Ilir District, West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi, serves as an effort to alleviate poverty and improve the well-being of coastal populations. Despite possessing abundant marine resources, these fishermen continue to face various challenges, including low human resource quality, a weak economic base, and a lack of institutional support. Consequently, an appropriate empowerment strategy is required one that focuses on enhancing productivity, developing the skills of the fishermen, utilizing the KUSUKA (Fishery Business Actor) card, providing insurance assistance, and strengthening cooperation through cooperatives—to help the fishermen become more self-reliant and prosperous.

The empowerment of fishing communities can be implemented through skills training, business mentoring, providing access to fishing insurance and KUSUKA (fisher identification) cards, as well as establishing cooperatives to assist with the procurement of equipment and the marketing of catches. Furthermore, the government and relevant stakeholders need to conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation to assess the success of these programs and address any challenges that arise. Through well-targeted program implementation and effective collaboration between the government and the community, it is expected that the productivity of fishers will increase, the local economy will improve, and the long-term well-being of the fishing community will be achieved.

## ADVANCED RESEARCH

The government and relevant stakeholders are expected to enhance empowerment programs for fishing communities through skills training, business assistance, access to insurance, and the optimal utilization of the KUSUKA (Fishery Business Actor) card. Furthermore, fishers should be encouraged to form and develop cooperatives, which would facilitate the procurement of business necessities and the marketing of their catch at fair prices. It is also hoped that fishing communities will actively participate in available empowerment programs to improve their capabilities, productivity, and economic self-reliance, thereby ensuring the sustainable well-being of coastal populations.

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