

Critical Ethnographic Communication in Supporting Corporate DEI and CSR

Muhammad Alfath Fiqhya Amrinagara^{1*}, Fitria Ayuningtyas²

¹ Student of Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jakarta, Email: alfathfiqhya@gmail.com

² Pusat Riset Masyarakat dan Budaya, Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional, Email: fitr061@brin.go.id

* Correspondence: email: alfathfiqhya@gmail.com

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Abstrak: Social inequality in multicultural and hierarchical workplaces presents significant challenges for companies in implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. This study applies a critical ethnographic perspective as a transformative organizational communication strategy to uncover and address often-overlooked social issues within corporate settings. Unlike top-down and symbolic approaches, critical ethnography foregrounds the voices of marginalized groups, including women, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. Using a qualitative descriptive analysis of relevant literature and a case study of Unilever Indonesia, the study demonstrates that integrating ethnographic insights into DEI and CSR communication helps reveal structural biases, foster inclusive narratives, and support the development of socially just policies. Organizations that adopt this approach become more responsive to social challenges and are better positioned to build sustainable relationships with their communities. Furthermore, two-way communication grounded in lived experiences strengthens the internalization of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) values, positioning critical ethnography not merely as an observational method but as a strategic bridge between corporations and complex social realities.

Keywords: organizational communication, critical ethnography, CSR, DEI, social inclusion

1. Introduction

Before the concept of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) gained widespread attention in the corporate world, many companies operated within work systems rooted in hierarchical, homogenous, and exclusive structures. Workspaces tended to reflect the dominance of majority groups, whether by gender, ethnicity, or physical ability, without providing equal space for marginalized groups to participate or express themselves. These inequalities often went unnoticed because they were hidden within organizational cultures that prioritized efficiency and compliance, ignoring the diversity of individual experiences and needs. In this context, communication practices within companies were often top-down and symbolic, with the voices of women, people with disabilities, or ethnic minorities not authentically accommodated in decision-making or communication strategies. This phenomenon created structural inequalities that

reinforced social injustice and became the root of various often-unacknowledged conflict dynamics in the workplace.

In the increasingly complex process of critical communication and growing awareness of social dynamics, a critical approach to public relations practice is becoming increasingly relevant and necessary. One approach that offers a framework for in-depth analysis of power, representation, and social dynamics is critical ethnography (Madison, 2019). This paradigm originates from the traditions of anthropology and the social sciences. Critical ethnography not only seeks to understand culture and social practices through observation and participation but also aims to uncover and challenge structures of inequality and domination in society. Public relations is a strategy designed for image building, strategic communication, and public perception management aimed at creating a positive image for a company or campaign. Therefore, incorporating critical ethnography into public relations practice opens up opportunities for developing a more reflective, inclusive, and transformative communication approach.

This article aims to explore the relationship between critical ethnography and public relations. Critical ethnography, as a research approach that highlights social inequality, representation, and the voices of marginalized groups, can serve as the foundation for more reflective and transformative public relations practices. Bridging the gap between the two lies in the potential of critical ethnography to provide a deep and authentic understanding of the social dynamics within and around organizations, which public relations practitioners can then translate into more inclusive, participatory, and social justice-oriented communication strategies. Thus, public relations no longer function merely as a corporate image tool but rather becomes a strategic space to meaningfully articulate the values of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of in-depth describing the practice of issue and crisis management through a critical ethnographic approach in the context of corporate public relations (PR) committed to DEI values. This research is not intended to test hypotheses, but rather to explore, understand, and describe communication practices and organizational culture related to efforts to build healthy relationships between companies, employees, and the community.

1.1 Literature Review

In this increasingly critical era, a campaign or organization needs an effort to build ethnography in its activities, where according to, ethnography itself is an activity involving the participation of ethnographers, in the daily lives of people over a long period of time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Lapasila, Et al, 2020), to observe what happens, listen to what is said, and ask questions through informal and formal interviews. The ethnography will produce an interpretation that can explain what is felt by the people interviewed, by doing this to many people will produce a strategy to answer and do the things obtained from the ethnography (Madison, 2019; Kewas & Darmastuti, 2020). According to Sharrock & Hughes (2001), In carrying out ethnography, the ethnographer has the task of identifying and conceptualizing the regularities of the phenomena that occur so that the process is quite investigative. Therefore, an open-ended approach is usually used so that the ethnographer must be able to determine who needs to be interviewed, how to develop the interview, and obtain results that can be processed into a strategy that can be implemented.

Ethnography itself can be classified as critical ethnography if it is used to conduct research to identify inequalities within a given setting. Madison (2019) also points out that this approach involves the researcher's ethical and political engagement to "stand with the oppressed" to gain the ethnographer's perspective from the marginalized side of everyday events. Therefore, the ethnographer's role here is not merely as an observer, but also as someone who has a role in effecting social change within a company. Ethnographers can act as agents of change, bringing understanding and knowledge through interviews to voice the experiences of marginalized groups such as women, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities within the environment. Ethnography, in this case, plays a strategic role in bridging the experiences of marginalized communities with the established structures of the company's culture, thereby contributing to the formation of more inclusive and transformative company policies (Hannigan, 2019). Thus, critical ethnography is an important tool in promoting structural awareness and equitable social practices within organizations.

Thus, this ethnographic crisis is a point of self-reflection where the ethnographer can realize and understand from within, enabling them to help the community from the root. The

ethnographer's task in conducting critical ethnography encourages involvement in creating social change that can have an impact. Critical ethnography, in this context, is expected to explore issues that can be reactive, but can also become preventative practices. A common issue is gender equality, which also pervades the workplace for marginalized groups. In-depth interviews with marginalized groups and observations of the work environment can reveal the problem areas that give rise to these issues. Therefore, if an ethnographer can obtain information and understand conditions on the ground, this critical ethnographic approach can provide a foundation for designing appropriate campaigns, grounded in the community's real-life experiences. This ensures that the communication and CSR processes implemented are aligned with the reality on the ground.

1.2 Ethnography and DEI in Workspaces

As previously discussed, women remain one of the marginalized groups in many workplace contexts. Although women's emancipation has been advocated since the early twentieth century, gender-based challenges persist in professional environments, often in subtle and unacknowledged forms, such as sexual harassment in the workplace. These challenges are partly rooted in the enduring perception that women are less capable than men of performing certain professional roles. Such stereotypes, which remain prevalent in many organizational settings, contribute to unequal treatment of women's perspectives, particularly in relation to their professional expertise. In organizational communication, women are frequently represented in stereotypical or merely symbolic ways (Rokhim & Noorrizki, 2023). Consequently, despite women's efforts to adapt to and integrate within workplace cultures, they are often perceived as "unfit" and evaluated through a gendered lens that emphasizes objectification rather than competence and skill. Nevertheless, as awareness of gender equality has increased, many organizations have demonstrated progress by promoting women through initiatives such as positioning them as representatives of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs and publicly endorsing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles (Kiradoo, 2023; Mullin et al., 2021). However, public representations of inclusivity do not always reflect internal organizational realities. For this reason, a critical ethnographic approach is essential to authentically capture

women's experiences and concerns, with ethnographic findings serving as a foundation for the development of more equitable workplace policies.

While the experiences of women in organizations reveal the persistence of patriarchal norms that shape workplace representation and expectations, similar challenges are faced by other marginalized groups, including people with disabilities and members of ethnic minority communities. Individuals with disabilities are frequently positioned as symbolic figures in corporate narratives that emphasize "empowerment," yet these representations are often not accompanied by the provision of genuinely safe and inclusive working environments. Charlton (1998) notes that people with disabilities continue to encounter barriers not only in terms of physical accessibility but also in communication practices and social interactions that are based on assumptions of "ideal" bodily norms. Even when organizations attempt to provide supportive infrastructure, social dimensions, such as coworkers' attitudes, everyday interactions, and informal communication practices, are often overlooked. These dynamics may include jokes or casual remarks that, while normalized within dominant groups, can marginalize individuals with disabilities. In this way, workplace norms shaped by able-bodied standards can perpetuate exclusion and discomfort.

Similar patterns can be observed in the experiences of individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds. The key difference lies in the heightened visibility of cultural difference, which often prompts stronger reactions from members of the dominant group. Variations in accent, vocabulary, and nonverbal communication that diverge from dominant cultural norms can create communication gaps and misunderstandings in the workplace. As with issues affecting people with disabilities, organizational interventions can address inclusion only to a certain extent, as many interactions occur beyond formal managerial control. Consequently, critical ethnography plays a vital role in uncovering the lived experiences of marginalized groups and comparing them with those of majority groups in order to identify points of tension and misunderstanding. By recognizing and valuing diversity as an inherent characteristic of organizational life, inclusive understandings can be fostered among majority groups, ultimately supporting more effective and equitable workplace communication.

The challenges faced by marginalized groups, as outlined above, can be understood as sources of workplace tension, as social and cultural dynamics are integral to organizational environments characterized by diverse identities, hierarchical structures, and unequal power relations. When left unaddressed, such tensions may result in dysfunction within work units and across organizational divisions. Desrayaud and Hurley (2023) argue that organizational and cultural conflicts emerge through interactions among members and stakeholders who are culturally situated within specific environments. Ethnography offers a valuable means of examining how individuals interpret and respond to behaviors that may carry different meanings across cultural contexts. Barrett (2013) further suggests that multicultural conflict often arises from unconscious and conflicting cultural assumptions that shape everyday communication practices. In this context, ethnographers, acting as both observers and interviewers, are well positioned to identify vulnerable points in culturally diverse workplace interactions and to inform strategies aimed at mitigating conflict.

1.3 Research Methods

Descriptive qualitative methods are one approach within qualitative research that aim to describe phenomena in depth and as they occur, in accordance with realities observed in the field (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). This study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology through a literature review and case study analysis. Data were collected from scientific articles, company reports, and documentation of communication campaigns conducted by multinational companies, such as Unilever in Indonesia. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify critical ethnographic practices embedded in corporate communication strategies.

2. Research Results

2.1 Ethnographic Communication and CSR Practices

An ethnographer can conduct in-depth observations and interviews that yield insights into mitigating organizational issues and identifying opportunities for expanding the scope of research. One example concerns how social tensions in the workplace emerge from cultural differences. In multinational companies, frequent interactions occur between foreign and local employees working within the same organizational environment. Hussain (2018) identifies several challenges

arising from cultural differences, including language barriers, stereotypes, ethnicity-related biases, culture shock, conflict resolution styles, task-solving approaches, decision-making processes, attitudes toward privacy, and nonverbal communication. Among these challenges, differences in decision-making styles and the processes used to reach decisions are among the most common sources of workplace tension.

Numerous variations in work culture can be observed in organizational settings, particularly in how work processes and meetings are conducted to align perspectives. Hofstede's (1980) seminal research identified six dimensions of national culture that influence workplace behavior, demonstrating that individuals from different countries exhibit distinct approaches to work. One dimension especially relevant to the Indonesian context is the Power Distance Index (PDI), which reflects the extent to which hierarchical relationships are accepted within organizations. Countries such as Malaysia and Saudi Arabia score highly on this dimension, indicating a strong emphasis on hierarchy, a pattern that is also evident in many Indonesian organizations. In such contexts, organizational hierarchies tend to be rigid, with superiors often dominating decision-making processes while subordinates adopt more passive roles. Employees frequently wait for explicit instructions rather than take initiative, partly to avoid being perceived as challenging authority. As a result, communication and decision-making become highly centralized at the top of the organizational structure. This observation is consistent with Hofstede's (1980) findings, which place Indonesia among the highest-ranking countries in PDI, with a score of 78. In multinational project settings, for example, tensions may arise when an Indonesian manager leads a team comprising members from low-PDI countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, and Australia. While the manager may expect deference and compliance, team members from low-PDI cultures may favor open dialogue and shared decision-making. Such tensions are often rooted in cross-cultural misunderstandings rather than intentional conflict, as individuals act according to the norms of their respective cultures.

Accordingly, organizations and campaigns that employ ethnography to address internal issues, responsibilities, and stakeholder needs must establish two-way communication with both employees and the broader community. The principle of two-way communication is central to the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, developed through research conducted by the

International Association of Business Communicators Research Foundation. Grunig (2008) argues that the value of public relations lies in an organization's social responsibility and the quality of its relationships with stakeholders. When these relationships are neglected, stakeholders may exert pressure on organizations to change or may oppose organizational decisions in ways that increase operational risks and costs. Consequently, companies seek positive stakeholder engagement, reinforced by institutional frameworks such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards. These frameworks have increasingly evolved into Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives within the workplace. Brown (2025) defines DEI as encompassing diversity across gender, age, race, ethnicity, and physical ability; equity in fair treatment; and inclusion through the recognition and respect of individual identities and experiences. To gain stakeholder support, organizations often implement campaigns aligned with social causes that reflect corporate values and demonstrate commitment to surrounding communities. As part of CSR and DEI implementation, companies typically produce reports documenting these activities as public relations efforts intended to generate reciprocal benefits for both the organization and society. Importantly, findings from ethnographic research can serve as a foundation for creating inclusive communication spaces that reduce conflict and promote more empathetic and effective organizational communication.

Through the implementation of robust CSR and DEI programs, organizations aim to ensure that meaningful messages are effectively received by intended audiences and beneficiaries. Within structured organizational systems, communication plays a critical role as a bridge connecting planned initiatives with desired outcomes. Dubravská et al. (2020) note that internal communication becomes more effective when CSR values are internalized within organizational culture, as this fosters employees' sense of belonging to the organization's broader social mission. Communication practices that were previously dominated by top-down approaches are expected to evolve into inclusive, two-way communication systems that accommodate differences in culture, gender, and individual ability. By adopting such approaches, employees are more likely to develop trust and feel empowered to express ideas, concerns, and differing perspectives without fear of discrimination. This perspective aligns with Habermas's (1980) theory, which

emphasizes that organizational actions should be aligned with their intended purposes to minimize psychological resistance and promote mutual understanding. Therefore, CSR and DEI initiatives must be strategically designed to convey clear and meaningful messages that genuinely reflect the insights and values revealed through ethnographic research.

Effective workplace communication plays a crucial role in fostering coordination and enhancing productivity, thereby forming an important foundation for the development of organizational cultures that support sustainability values, including those embodied in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks. Although effective internal communication is not always formally categorized as part of ESG programs, it contributes significantly to social sustainability by strengthening relationships and enhancing the quality of corporate social responsibility practices. Christensen et al. (2013) argue that organizations that succeed in implementing sustainability strategies are those capable of fostering reflective internal dialogue and encouraging the participation of all organizational members, including marginalized groups.

Integrating ESG values into organizational communication requires a sensitive and inclusive approach that acknowledges social diversity in the workplace. In this context, effective communication assumes a strategic role in creating work environments that promote social justice and mutual recognition among employees. For example, certain groups within organizations may become marginalized because their communication styles differ from dominant workplace norms. Even in the absence of harmful intent, such differences may be perceived as “abnormal” and lead to exclusion. The application of critical ethnography enables organizations to understand the narratives constructed around these groups and the meanings attributed to their communication practices by others. Insights derived from critical ethnographic analysis can subsequently inform the development of ESG-related policies that are more responsive to organizational realities. Thus, an inclusive communication approach not only strengthens the social dimension of ESG but also reflects the quality of ethical and sustainable corporate governance.

The findings of this study demonstrate that critical ethnography facilitates the identification of often-hidden organizational issues, including gender discrimination, communication barriers faced by people with disabilities, and stereotypes directed at ethnic minority groups. By bridging

communication between dominant and marginalized groups, critical ethnography supports the formulation of policies grounded in lived experiences and empirical realities, thereby contributing to more equitable and effective organizational practices.

2.2 Implementation of DEI and CSR in Indonesia

Research conducted by McKinsey (2020) on sustainability indicates that companies with a strong focus on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices tend to demonstrate better financial performance than those that do not prioritize ESG. This advantage is attributed to the ability of ESG-oriented activities to enhance financial value by strengthening customer relationships and integrating sustainability into core business strategies. In Indonesia, domestic companies have increasingly begun to implement ESG-related initiatives. For instance, PT Unilever Indonesia has publicly reported its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) achievements as of 2023 through its official website. The company highlights progress in gender equality, noting increased female representation at the levels of commissioners, directors, and management, as well as its support for women's representation in teams and the inclusion of people with disabilities. Beyond public-facing communication, PT Unilever Indonesia has also implemented internal measures to foster a positive work environment through its Respect, Dignity, and Fair Treatment (RDFT) Code of Ethics, which promotes diversity, mutual trust, respect for human rights, and equal opportunities without discrimination. In addition, the company has introduced collaborative initiatives aimed at preventing bullying in the workplace.

Similarly, the application of ethnography within corporate settings involves conducting in-depth interviews with employees, including individuals from marginalized groups. Drawing on Spradley's (1979) ethnographic framework, the purpose of ethnography is to observe and listen as comprehensively as possible in order to generate detailed records from interviews and to identify potential solutions to organizational problems. Such an approach can be particularly valuable for corporate public relations activities. Collaboration between ethnographers and corporate social responsibility (CSR) teams can yield more nuanced insights into the implementation and impact of CSR programs. Ethnographers may interview relevant internal teams to gather information about organizational priorities and CSR objectives, which can then

be examined in relation to the social conditions of the communities targeted by these programs. While ethnographic findings may not immediately indicate clear solutions, they can help identify underlying issues. For example, a company experiencing financial losses due to difficulties in engaging local consumers may recognize the problem but struggle to implement effective interventions. Through critical communication informed by ethnographic insights, however, organizations may better understand local contexts and design more responsive and effective strategies.

One example of this approach can be observed in PT Unilever Indonesia's use of gender equality as a central campaign message, positioning gender as a dimension of diversity that continues to face marginalization. Through this initiative, the company promotes the principle that professional positions should not be determined by gender, race, or background. Internal and external communications reinforce this message by emphasizing equal opportunities for marginalized groups to attain managerial, director-level, and commissioner positions. This commitment is also reflected in Unilever Indonesia's social media campaigns, including those commemorating International Women's Day, which highlight the company's support for the DEI movement. In addition, Unilever Indonesia promotes programs that encourage women to pursue careers in fields traditionally dominated by men. One such initiative is the Unilever Women in Engineering Leadership Fellowship, which targets female students with engineering backgrounds who aspire to careers in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) supply chain. In 2023, approximately 1,100 students participated in this program.



Figure 1: Women in Engineering or Engineering Women Unilever Leadership Fellowship (WULF) Program

Source: Unilever Instagram account @kami.unilever (2025)

The ethnographic approach implemented by PT Unilever Indonesia in its public relations strategy demonstrates how understanding culture and social experiences can shape more empathetic and relevant corporate communications. In its efforts to address social and gender issues, Unilever goes beyond symbolic CSR programs to present initiatives that directly impact marginalized groups. One example is a reproductive health education program aimed at people with disabilities, particularly the deaf. This program demonstrates that health, gender, and disability issues can be strategic entry points for building meaningful relationships between companies and communities. Unilever's campaigns have successfully promoted the representation of women and people with disabilities through social media campaigns. This is certainly inseparable from field findings and input from internal communities, which assist in ethnographic research that aligns with the company's mission.

The public reception of this campaign demonstrates the effectiveness of its empathetic and ethnographic-based communication approach. Unilever positions itself not as a sole decision-maker, but as a facilitator of space for previously unheard voices. In the campaign narrative delivered through social media, Unilever consistently uses personal stories from individuals from

marginalized communities, such as women, people with disabilities, and non-majority ethnic groups. This strategy not only validates their experiences but also forges a bond with users and the wider community.

The use of inclusive language such as "No more waiting, no more hesitating. Let's #AccelerateAction for Gender Equality" or "Everyone has the right to thrive" is one example of Unilever's efforts to translate the values of diversity and inclusion into public communication practices. In addition to the verbal aspect, the visual aspects displayed are also highly representative, reflecting ethnic diversity, age, and physical condition. The content delivered by Unilever is intended to create a sense of closeness with employees and the community who use Unilever's products. Through an in-depth ethnographic approach, one way Unilever does this is through observation of external communities and internal reflection. Unilever can develop a public relations strategy that not only focuses on critical issues, but also proactively builds an inclusive and socially responsible corporate image through established programs. This shows that in the context of culture-based issue and crisis management, ethnography can be a strategic tool in strengthening corporate relationships with the public, while creating a unique point in brand communication.

Unilever has developed a distinct approach to implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs within its organizational environment. Examining Unilever's practices more closely provides insight into why these initiatives constitute a central strategic focus for the company. Unilever Indonesia has received recognition for its sustainability performance, including the Best Listed Company Based on ESG Score award at the CSA Awards, organized by the Indonesian Securities Analysts Association (AAEI) in collaboration with the CSA Community. This award was granted in recognition of Unilever Indonesia's four sustainability pillars: Climate, Nature, Plastic, and Livelihoods. Through these pillars, the company implements a range of initiatives aimed at promoting long-term sustainability and improving community welfare. According to a report published by the Kumparan news outlet, Unilever Indonesia reduced its carbon emissions by 11.22% in 2023, processed 56,159 tons of plastic waste, and expanded employment opportunities through its Bango Soy Sauce product by

involving approximately 35,000 black soybean farmers in sustainable livelihoods (Kumparan, 2024).

The ethnographic approach employed by Unilever Indonesia in the design and implementation of its communication strategies, particularly in social campaigns addressing gender equality and disability inclusion, reflects a deep understanding of community values, norms, and everyday lived experiences. By applying ethnographic principles such as observing the daily lives of target communities, constructing authentic narratives, and directly engaging with marginalized groups, Unilever is able to establish communication bridges that are both culturally sensitive and emotionally resonant. This approach enables the company to align its corporate messaging with the social realities of its stakeholders, thereby enhancing the credibility and relevance of its communication efforts.

Unilever Indonesia thus serves as a compelling example of the application of critical ethnography within corporate social campaigns. The company's initiatives, including the Women in Engineering program and health education initiatives targeting marginalized communities, highlight how ethnographic insights can inform ethical, inclusive, and empowering corporate communication practices. This case underscores the role of critical ethnography as a strategic tool for advancing socially responsible communication while reinforcing corporate commitments to sustainability and inclusion.

3. Conclusion

Critical ethnography serves a strategic function in uncovering and understanding dynamics of power, inequality, and social tension within multicultural and multi-hierarchical workplaces. As an approach that emphasizes understanding from within, critical ethnography enables organizations to recognize the lived concerns of marginalized groups, including women, people with disabilities, and individuals from minority cultural backgrounds. The insights generated through ethnographic research can provide a foundation for designing relevant and impactful organizational policies, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies. In contemporary organizational contexts, openness to diversity and inclusion cannot remain merely symbolic; it must be embedded within organizational culture and

aligned with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) sustainability values. Internal communication plays a crucial role in bridging differences and strengthening participation, making two-way communication a key foundation for building socially resilient organizations. By integrating ethnographic findings into communication strategies, organizations are better equipped not only to respond reactively to social demands but also to prevent potential conflicts proactively. Consequently, the success of ESG and broader sustainability initiatives depends on how effectively organizations listen, understand, and respond through inclusive and equitable communication practices.

From an ethnographic perspective, Unilever's approach to implementing CSR programs in support of sustainability demonstrates the company's commitment to understanding the values, social practices, and cultural structures of the communities surrounding its operations. Through ethnographic engagement, Unilever has gathered insights that enable the development of sustainability strategies grounded in cultural understanding. This approach reflects a corporate orientation that extends beyond the pursuit of business objectives to encompass social and environmental responsibilities, as articulated through DEI and CSR initiatives. These programs contribute to the formation of a positive corporate image, enhance community acceptance, and foster inclusive social relationships with both surrounding and target communities. Beyond external engagement, Unilever's DEI initiatives also strengthen internal organizational communication through measures such as anti-bullying campaigns, leadership development programs, and equality initiatives for marginalized groups, as well as through the elimination of discrimination and stigma as core organizational values.

Accordingly, the success of CSR and DEI programs should not be assessed solely on the basis of published performance indicators, but also on the organization's ability to understand, respect, and accommodate social differences among the communities that work within and live around the company. Creating an inclusive ecosystem for both internal and external stakeholders is central to sustainable organizational practice. Viewed through this lens, the arguments presented in this study are grounded in an ethnographic perspective that emphasizes participation, reflexivity, and mutual understanding as the foundations of sustainable social change.

Critical ethnography thus makes a significant contribution to corporate communication strategies by enabling the identification of social issues, amplifying the voices of marginalized groups, and supporting the formulation of policies rooted in principles of justice and inclusion. This approach is particularly relevant for strengthening the social dimension of ESG and CSR frameworks. Overall, this study affirms that cultural understanding derived from ethnographic research constitutes a crucial foundation for the development of reflective, inclusive, and sustainable organizational communication.

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Towards Economic Independence: Community Empowerment Through the *Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara* (PENA) Program in Banyumas District

Asyhabuddin¹, Imam Alfi², Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri Ageng Widodo³, Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri⁴

¹IAIN Kediri: asyhab@iainkediri.ac.id

²IAIN Kediri : cita47@gmail.com

³Universitas Islam Negeri Purwokerto: Widodoageng009@gmail.com

⁴Universitas Islam Negeri Purwokerto: Saifuddinzuhri@gmail.com

Abstract : *This study aims to analyze community empowerment through business independence in the Nusantara Economic Heroes Program (Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara, PENA) in Banyumas District. The analysis employs the ACTORS framework, which consists of Authority, Confidence and Competence, Trust, Opportunities, Responsibilities, and Support. This research uses a field research approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings show that, first, the PENA program fosters participant independence by encouraging ownership of authority in managing their businesses. Second, PENA participants demonstrate high self-confidence in their ability to operate their businesses independently. Third, participants have strong confidence that the PENA program can bring positive changes to their social and economic conditions. Fourth, participants are given substantial opportunities to independently choose the type of business they operate. Fifth, participants assume full responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of the businesses they establish through the PENA program. Finally, PENA participants receive the necessary support to start, manage, and sustain their chosen businesses.*

Keyword: Community empowerment, Economic independence, PENA Program; ACTORS theory, Social assistance beneficiaries

1. Introduction

Poverty is a global phenomenon, and no country in the world is entirely free from it (Sabran et al., 2023). Poverty is one of the main social welfare problems (SWP) that a state must address through various strategies agreed upon by state administrators. In Indonesia, the 1945 Constitution mandates that the state shall care for the poor and neglected children (1945 Constitution, Article 34, paragraph 1).

The mandate of the 1945 Constitution is implemented, among other ways, through the provision of social protection in its two main forms: social assistance and social security (Ministry of National Development Planning [MONDP], 2014). Currently, the Government of Indonesia (GOI) is implementing ten social assistance programs aimed at helping poor people achieve a decent and quality life, thereby fostering a welfare-oriented society and a high-quality future generation.

Social assistance, as a form of social protection, plays an important role in ensuring that individuals with incomes below the poverty line can maintain a decent standard of living. Through social assistance, individuals without income or with income below the poverty line are able to obtain adequate nutrition and access quality education and health services (Suharto, 2014).

Despite the significant benefits of social assistance, a major concern is beneficiaries' dependency on the assistance they receive. A well-known adage often cited in this context is, "Don't give a man a fish; teach him how to fish." This adage suggests that the most effective strategy for addressing social welfare problems is to build the capacity of poor individuals to generate income productively, enabling them to become self-reliant. In contrast, the strategy of "giving fish," which refers to consumptive social assistance that is quickly exhausted, is viewed as creating stagnant welfare conditions. Such conditions may ultimately foster dependency, requiring continuous state provision and hindering long-term poverty alleviation.

Concerns regarding beneficiary dependency formed the basis for the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) of the Republic of Indonesia to initiate the Nusantara Economic Heroes Program (*Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara*, PENA) (Noer, 2023). The PENA program was introduced at the end of 2022 through pilot projects in several regions before being expanded into a national program.

The PENA program was officially implemented with the issuance of Minister of Social Affairs Regulation (Permensos) Number 7 of 2023, dated 14 November 2023. The Nusantara Economic Heroes Program (PENA) is defined as "activities to build the entrepreneurial spirit and improve the entrepreneurial skills of poor families, vulnerable groups, isolated groups, and/or disaster victims" (Permensos No. 7/2023, Article 1, paragraph 1). This program is intended to replace the Productive Economic Business Social Assistance (Usaha Ekonomi Produktif, UEP) program provided to Joint Business Groups (Kelompok Usaha Bersama, KUBE), as the previous program was considered no longer aligned with current developments and needs (Permensos No. 7/2023, Consideration Section, letter c). The primary objective of the PENA program is to "reduce dependence on social assistance through sustainable efforts" (Permensos No. 7/2023, Article 2).

Since the launch of its pilot projects, the PENA program has demonstrated notable achievements. These achievements are reflected in the graduation rate of participants from their status as social assistance beneficiaries. Participants are considered eligible for graduation when they achieve economic independence, indicated by an income above the minimum wage in their respective districts or cities. Six months after the pilot projects began, in July 2023, the program successfully graduated 1,191 families from social assistance. This number increased to 7,814 families by November 2023. These outcomes make the PENA program an important subject for further examination in order to identify a social policy model with strong potential to eradicate poverty and reduce poverty rates in Indonesia.

Based on the discussion above, this research is important for assessing the extent to which the PENA program is able to foster independence from social assistance. This study examines two key dimensions: (1) the extent to which the PENA program is able to graduate social assistance recipients at the research location (quantitative dimension), and (2) the level of independence achieved by former social assistance beneficiaries at the research location (qualitative dimension).

2. Method

This study employed field research with a qualitative approach, focusing on descriptive data obtained through holistic observation of words and behaviors. The researchers served as the primary instruments, conducting data collection and analysis from the beginning to the end of the study. The research subjects included 27 recipients of the PENA Program in Banyumas District, the TSKS Coordinator, and five social facilitators who supervised the implementation of the program from the submission stage through reporting. The research was conducted in Banyumas District over a six-month period, from January to June 2024.

Data were collected through interviews (both structured and unstructured), observations (participatory and non-participatory), and documentation. Interviews were conducted either in person or online to obtain comprehensive data, while observations supported the findings through direct field observation. Documentation was used as supplementary data. The data were

analyzed descriptively using the ACTORS framework (Authority, Confidence and Competence, Trust, Opportunities, Responsibilities, and Support) to examine community empowerment within the PENA Program. Data validity was ensured through triangulation, which involved cross-checking data among research subjects and confirming findings with other relevant data sources or documents. The analysis focuses on community empowerment in the PENA Program, and the findings form the basis for the study's conclusions and recommendations.

3. Results And Discussion

3.1 Community Empowerment Through the *Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara* (PENA) Program in Banyumas District

One of the community empowerment programs managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs is the Nusantara Economic Heroes Program (*Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara*, PENA), which aims to assist families who are current cash transfer beneficiaries in becoming financially independent. Participants in this program are entitled to receive business-related assistance in the form of products and supplies valued at approximately IDR 5–6 million. Overall, the PENA program seeks to reduce community dependence on social assistance.

The primary beneficiary families (*Keluarga Penerima Manfaat*, KPMs) of the PENA program in Banyumas District are individuals aged between 20 and 45 years. Eligible beneficiaries must not have elderly or persons with disabilities as dependent family members. The program is implemented through business training, packaging support, marketing assistance, financial literacy education, and continuous mentoring.

The PENA program has supported poor communities in Banyumas District in achieving economic independence, thereby enabling beneficiaries to graduate from their status as recipients of social assistance. Based on the discussion above, human resources play a crucial role in the successful implementation of educational programs, effective human resource management, and business development activities, such as catfish farming and other livelihood sectors. The assistance provided under the program includes both capital support and business skills training.

a. Verification and Validation

At this stage, social advisors obtain information on PENA program participants from the Social Welfare Information System (SIKS). Through the application, advisors access detailed data on program participants, which are then verified in the field. This verification process is intended to assess the accuracy of the data against actual conditions. If the data are found to be accurate, the advisors validate the participants and proceed to the next stage of the program.

Based on field findings, several issues were identified during the verification and validation process. First, PENA participants in a given location are not always assisted by the advisor formally assigned to that location in the system. For example, a PENA participant registered in the SIKS application as residing in Sirau Village, Kemranjen Subdistrict, may be officially assigned to an advisor responsible for Sumbang Subdistrict. Field observations indicate that the verification and validation process is, in practice, carried out by the local advisor in Sirau Village, who must coordinate with the advisor assigned to Sumbang Subdistrict. An informant explained the need for intensive coordination and communication as follows (PENA Advisor for Sirau Village, Interview, 2024) :

"It is not necessarily a problem, but there are indeed challenges. Technically, those working in the field are local advisors, such as the advisor for Sirau Village. He or she works in coordination with the advisor assigned to Sumbang Subdistrict. So, even though the application records that the advisor for Sumbang Subdistrict is on duty, it is the local advisor who actually completes the task."

To ensure the smooth implementation of the program, advisors must maintain continuous communication and coordination. Such coordination is essential because the verification and validation process serves as a benchmark for ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of program targeting in relation to actual field conditions. In an interview, a PENA advisor stated (PENA Advisor, Interview, 2024):

"The main key is intensive coordination and communication. Advisors in the field and those registered in the application need to communicate consistently with one another to ensure that the program runs on track. With good communication, challenges can be addressed."

Second, during the field verification stage, advisors found that some of the data they received did not correspond with the actual conditions observed in the field. For instance, several

participants who were still recorded as poor and therefore considered eligible for assistance were found to be living relatively prosperous lives, such as owning permanent houses, four-wheeled vehicles, or even serving as village officials. In such cases, advisors revised the data to reflect the factual conditions identified in the field. Where the data were found to be accurate, advisors validated them and proceeded to the next stage. As described by one advisor (PENA Advisor, Interview, 2024):

“In the field verification process, it is not uncommon for us to find data that does not match the actual conditions of the participants. For example, there are participants who are still registered as poor and considered eligible for assistance, but after checking in the field, their conditions turn out to be much better. There are cases where participants already have permanent houses, four-wheeled vehicles, and some have even become village officials.”

A major challenge identified by advisors relates to the availability of data that are inaccurate and not regularly updated, resulting in what they described as “raw” data. In addition, communication by advisors plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth implementation of this process, as potential beneficiaries are sometimes surprised by the information contained in official records. One advisor explained (PENA Advisor, Interview, 2024):

“One of the biggest challenges is the accuracy of the data we receive. The recorded data are often not updated regularly, so we have to be very careful when verifying them in the field. In addition, communication with participants is an important factor, because sometimes they realize that the recorded data are no longer relevant to their current situation. The main key is good coordination and continuous data updating. Communication with both participants and local government is also very important to ensure that the data we use are accurate and up to date. We also work with local village officials to obtain the latest information on the conditions of their residents.”

Third, an informant noted that not all PENA participants were willing or enthusiastic to participate in the program. The informant understood that participation in the PENA program could result in removal from the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS). Once removed from the DTKS, individuals are no longer eligible to receive any form of government assistance. This potential loss of eligibility was a major source of concern for the informant. In cases where advisors encounter participants with such concerns, they provide clarification and explanation regarding the objectives and implications of the program. One participant expressed this concern as follows (Sofi, Interview, 2024):

"My biggest concern is the impact of participating in the PENA Program on my status in the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS). Once registered as a PENA beneficiary and considered economically better off, I will be removed from the DTKS. This means that I will no longer be entitled to receive various forms of government assistance, such as cash transfers, food assistance, and other programs. My status as a DTKS beneficiary serves as a form of social security for me. Losing this status, even if it indicates an improved economic condition, still worries me because I am afraid of losing access to government assistance in the future."

Advisors provide potential beneficiaries with explanations and clarification that, once they are deemed eligible for graduation, they will continue to be included in the PENA program. However, if field findings indicate that they are not yet eligible for graduation, advisors inform them that they are not ready to participate in the PENA program at that stage. Following the verification and validation process, the next step involves the preparation of business proposals for eligible PENA participants.

When advisors encounter participants who are hesitant or concerned, the initial step is to provide a clearer and more comprehensive explanation of the PENA program. As one advisor explained (PENA Advisor, Interview, 2024):

"I explain that the main goal of this program is to help participants become more economically independent by improving their standard of living, so that they are no longer dependent on social assistance. We also explain that being removed from the DTKS is actually a positive indication, as it shows an improvement in their welfare."

b. Assistance in Preparing Business Proposal Documents

The PENA Program is designed to strengthen the economic capacity of its participants so that they can become independent from social assistance. Accordingly, the preparation of business proposals is oriented toward businesses in which participants are already engaged, as they are assessed to possess the skills and experience necessary to operate these enterprises. Field findings indicate that most participants already have businesses that align with their abilities and therefore tend to continue their existing ventures. For participants who do not yet have a business, discussions are conducted with family members and advisors to select a suitable type of business based on careful consideration.

Field observations also show that PENA participants engage in discussions with fellow participants or other local business actors when deciding on the type of business to pursue. This approach helps minimize the risk of direct competition in similar types of businesses. To facilitate this process, several discussion sessions are organized, both in group and individual formats. During group sessions, participants share experiences, ask questions, and express concerns. Advisors are present to provide explanations and clarification, as well as to listen to participants' feedback. These discussion forums are flexible in nature and are held regularly throughout the program (Ahmad, Interview, 2024).

Through this process, participants' confidence and trust are strengthened, enabling them to select businesses that align with their abilities and can serve as a foundation for further business development. At this stage, advisors not only provide guidance on selecting appropriate business types but also assist participants in preparing the Budget Plan. The proposed budget, amounting to IDR 5,000,000, is prepared in accordance with the specific needs of the business to be developed by each PENA participant. Once the budget preparation is complete, advisors upload the documents to the SIKS application and monitor the system periodically for further instructions. As stated by one advisor (Masitoh, Interview, 2024):

"In addition to providing advice on the type of business, advisors also assist participants in preparing the budget. This is a very important stage, because the budget serves as a guide for managing the assistance funds they receive. We help participants identify their business needs, calculate the required costs for operations, and estimate realistic expenses and income."

c. Disbursement and Purchase of Goods

After all submission documents have been uploaded to the SIKS application, the next stage is the disbursement of PENA funds. Information regarding the disbursement process is obtained and communicated by advisors to PENA participants. Fund disbursement is carried out through the Indonesian Post Office in the subdistrict where the participants reside, and advisors are involved in assisting during this process.

As one advisor explained, advisors are indeed involved in the fund disbursement stage; however, their role is primarily technical and focused on ensuring that all disbursement

procedures are followed correctly by participants. Advisors are not directly involved in managing or distributing the funds. Instead, they assist participants in preparing the required documents and ensure that participants clearly understand the disbursement procedures (Mukromah, Interview, 2024).

Following the disbursement, PENA participants spend the funds in accordance with the budget plans they previously submitted. Each expenditure must be supported by a purchase receipt, which is later used in the preparation of financial reports. Field observations indicate that advisors perform their duties carefully and thoroughly, thereby motivating participants to implement the program as intended. As noted by one advisor (Hartini, Interview, 2024):

“After the funds are disbursed, advisors continue to guide participants on how the funds should be spent in line with the previously prepared budget. We ensure that the funds are allocated appropriately and in accordance with the planned business objectives, so that participants can start or further develop their businesses effectively.”

In the implementation of the PENA program, some advisors also take the initiative to assist participants in registering for a Business Identification Number (Nomor Induk Berusaha, NIB) through the Online Single Submission (OSS) system. OSS is an online platform that facilitates entrepreneurs in obtaining business permits efficiently. In addition, advisors help PENA participants apply for halal certification for the products they sell. These initiatives contribute to building public trust by ensuring that the products meet recognized standards of quality.

One advisor explained this initiative as follows (Zaenurrohmah, Interview, 2024):

“Some advisors initiate the processing of NIB for PENA Program participants. We see that many participants need business legality, and having an NIB is an important step. Advisors often take the initiative to help participants understand the benefits of an NIB and assist with the registration process.”

d. Activity Reporting

The next stage of the program is activity reporting. Reports are prepared by advisors after the assistance funds have been spent and the participants' businesses are in operation. This reporting process is intended to ensure that the PENA program has been implemented in accordance with established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Local PENA advisors

communicate and coordinate with other advisors to facilitate the reporting process. The completed reports are uploaded through the designated Google Drive platform.

In their reports, advisors document various aspects of program implementation, including the allocation of funds, the condition of participants' businesses, and the initial outcomes of business operations. Advisors also report any obstacles or constraints encountered by participants during the operation of their businesses. All of this information is compiled into an official report, which is subsequently submitted to relevant stakeholders, such as local government authorities or program organizers, for further evaluation (Marfuah, Interview, 2024).

e. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the PENA program are conducted by both advisors and the surveyor team. These monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities aim to ensure that the PENA program is being implemented as planned and to assess the progress and development of businesses established or supported through the program.

3.2 Analysis of Actors in Empowerment through the PENA Program

Actors Theory is widely used to analyze various community empowerment programs. This theory was introduced by Sarah Cook, who conceptualizes society as an active subject in the empowerment process. ACTORS is an acronym that represents Authority (A), Confidence and Competence (C), Trust (T), Opportunities (O), Responsibilities (R), and Support (S). The findings of this study related to empowerment through the PENA program are presented as follows.

a. The PENA Program fosters participant independence by encouraging authority in business management

The PENA program focuses on building the capacity and capabilities of participants so that they are able to develop their businesses independently and sustainably. The program seeks to strengthen this independence by providing participants with training, access to resources, and guidance necessary for operating their businesses autonomously. This independence encompasses financial, operational, and strategic dimensions.

In addition, the PENA program encourages participants to exercise authority over their businesses. Possessing authority grants participants both the freedom and responsibility to make decisions related to their business operations. Within the context of the PENA program, this means that participants are encouraged to take full control of their enterprises, from planning to implementation. They act as the primary decision-makers in areas such as resource management, product development, and marketing strategies. Participants are not only equipped with knowledge and skills, but are also empowered with the confidence to manage their businesses independently, with minimal interference from external parties (Umi Sholihah, Interview, 2024).

b. PENA participants demonstrate high self-confidence in managing their businesses independently

Participants in the PENA program demonstrate strong self-confidence in their ability to overcome challenges and make decisions required for effective business management. This level of confidence is developed through various forms of training, mentoring, and continuous support provided throughout the program.

Moreover, PENA participants believe that they possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to manage their businesses effectively. They are prepared to solve problems and make critical decisions that influence business success. Participants are able to operate their businesses without excessive reliance on external assistance and are autonomous in decision-making and the execution of business strategies. This independence also implies a willingness to assume full responsibility for all aspects of their businesses, including potential successes and failures (Auva, Interview, 2024).

c. PENA participants have strong confidence that the PENA program brings positive social and economic change

High confidence refers to participants' strong belief and optimism that the PENA program will have a positive impact on their social and economic conditions. Participants believe that the program can effectively help them achieve both short-term and long-term goals. The PENA

program is designed to support participants, particularly small and medium, scale entrepreneurs, by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and capacity to develop their businesses. This support includes access to resources, mentoring, and other forms of assistance necessary for business success.

In addition to economic improvements, participants also experience increased appreciation and recognition within their communities as a result of their business achievements. These changes are reflected in improved income levels, greater financial stability, and an enhanced ability to provide better living conditions for themselves and their families. Participants believe that the skills and support gained through the PENA program enable them to improve their businesses, which in turn strengthens their overall economic well-being (Muntingah, Interview, 2024).

d. PENA participants are provided with opportunities to choose the type of business they operate

The PENA program does not restrict participants' choices of business types; instead, it provides them with the freedom and support necessary to make informed decisions. Participants are not forced or directed toward particular types of businesses by program organizers. Rather, they are encouraged to explore business opportunities that align with their interests, skills, and understanding of local market conditions.

e. PENA participants assume full responsibility for the sustainability of their businesses

Participants demonstrate a strong sense of obligation and commitment to ensuring that the businesses they establish through the PENA program can continue to operate and grow. They take full responsibility for maintaining and developing their enterprises without relying on external parties to assume this role. Business sustainability refers to the capacity of a business to operate and expand over the long term, encompassing financial, operational, and strategic dimensions. To ensure sustainability, participants must develop solid business plans, apply effective financial management practices, and implement appropriate marketing and product development strategies (Auva, Interview, 2024).

f. PENA program participants receive comprehensive support to start and sustain their chosen businesses

Participants receive various forms of support to help them establish and operate their businesses effectively. This support includes: (1) training, which provides essential knowledge and skills in business management, marketing, finance, and operations; (2) guidance and mentoring from experts or experienced entrepreneurs who offer direction and advice; (3) access to resources, such as capital, raw materials, technology, and business networks; (4) funding, in the form of initial capital assistance or access to credit; and (5) networking opportunities that enable participants to connect with partners, investors, and business communities.

Participants are free to choose the type of business they wish to pursue based on their interests, skills, and perceived market opportunities. While the PENA program does not prescribe specific business types, it provides comprehensive support for any business selected by the participants (Muntingah, Interview, 2024).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the community empowerment program for social assistance beneficiaries managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs is the Nusantara Economic Heroes Program (*Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara*, PENA). This program aims to support families who are current cash transfer beneficiaries in achieving greater financial independence. Participants in the program receive in-kind assistance valued at approximately IDR 5-6 million to support the development of their businesses. Overall, the PENA program seeks to reduce community dependence on social assistance.

Empowerment through the PENA program is reflected in several key aspects. First, the program fosters participant independence by encouraging ownership and authority in managing their businesses. Second, PENA participants demonstrate high self-confidence in their ability to operate their businesses independently. Third, participants have strong confidence that the PENA program can bring positive changes to their social and economic conditions. Fourth, participants are provided with substantial opportunities to independently choose the type of business they

wish to operate. Fifth, PENA participants assume full responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of the businesses they establish through the program. Finally, PENA program participants receive the necessary support to start, manage, and sustain the businesses of their choice.

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Strategies of the General Election Commission in Reducing Voter Abstention and Increasing Public Participation in Regional Head Elections: A Case Study of the 2024 Local Election in Bima City

Kurniati^{1*}, Rifai², Salahuddin³, Nurfarhati⁴

¹²³⁴Public Administration Department; Mbojo University, Bima;

* Correspondence: kurniati4699@gmail.com;

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Abstrak: *This study aims to analyze the efforts of the Bima City General Elections Commission (KPU) to reduce voter abstention and enhance public participation in the 2024 Regional Head Election (Pilkada). A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that the KPU of Bima City implemented various strategies, including face-to-face public outreach, voter education programs, the use of social media, the installation of campaign information materials, and the engagement of religious leaders, community figures, and Democracy Volunteers. Although the number of registered voters increased by 9,398 compared to the 2018 Pilkada, the voter turnout rate slightly declined from 84.13% to 84.04%. Supporting factors for voter participation include community-based outreach and the involvement of local leaders, while inhibiting factors consist of low political literacy, voter apathy, and high mobility among young voters. This study recommends strengthening area-based outreach strategies and allocating a dedicated budget for research on abstention behavior to improve voter participation in future elections.*

Keywords: *KPU, voter abstention, political participation, 2024 regional head election.*

1. Introduction

Indonesia, as a democratic nation, positions its citizens as the holders of the highest sovereignty in accordance with the principle of government of the people, by the people, and for the people. National and local elections (Pemilu and Pilkada) serve as essential mechanisms for realizing this principle, as the electoral process is conducted directly, universally, freely, confidentially, fairly, and transparently, as mandated by Law No. 7/2017 and various regulations issued by the General Elections Commission (KPU). However, one persistent challenge is the phenomenon of voter abstention (golput), which refers to individuals who intentionally refrain from exercising their voting rights for technical, ideological, or pragmatic reasons (Yeboah-assiamah et al., 2014); (Stokes, 2018). This phenomenon directly affects the legitimacy of electoral outcomes and serves as an indicator of low levels of political participation at the local level.

Public participation in a democratic system extends beyond mere attendance at polling stations on election day (Fung, 2015); (Miles, 2015). It also encompasses community involvement in policy formulation, implementation, and oversight. The concept of oral democracy emphasizes the importance of deliberative spaces that allow citizens to engage in dialogue and express their aspirations directly (Ishaka, 2024); (Rifai & Haeril, 2024); (Husain et al., 2024). Similarly, the concept of open democracy asserts that a high quality democracy must ensure openness, inclusivity, transparency, and equitable representation in all decision making processes. Inclusive public participation strengthens governmental legitimacy and enhances the overall quality of democracy (Green et al., 2003); (Rallings & Thrasher, 2007); (Ladner et al., 2014); .

Furthermore, political communication theory provides an important analytical lens for understanding how political messages influence public behavior and electoral participation. Political communication is not merely the transmission of information but also involves the construction, dissemination, and reception of messages capable of shaping public opinion (Green et al., 2003); (Paper et al., 2009); (Nickerson, 2015). With rapid advancements in digital technology, social media has become a strategic channel for reaching voters, particularly younger generations. Social media facilitates two way political communication, enabling citizens to act not only as recipients of information but also as active disseminators of political messages (Rifai & Haeril, 2025).

In the context of political behavior, social change theories explain the evolving dynamics of values, norms, and collective behavior (Blondel et al., 1997); (Gronke & Miller, 2014.). Social change arises from the interaction of internal factors, such as culture and values, and external factors, including technological development and public policy (Oostveen, 2023.). Young people serve as primary drivers of social change due to their openness to technology and democratic values (Lassen, 2004); (Mullin, 2007); (Caren, 2007); (Green & Gerber, 2020). These shifts contribute to the emergence of a more critical and participatory society with heightened political awareness (Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2003); (Giammo & Brox, 2008); (Mcdonnell & Scholarship, 2019).

The phenomenon of voter abstention in the 2024 Bima City Pilkada can be explained through three primary categories, namely technical, ideological, and pragmatic abstention (Yusri & Amrizal, 2019). Technical abstention occurs due to administrative barriers, such as unregistered voters or the absence of voting invitations. Ideological abstention reflects a form of political protest against a system perceived as failing to represent public interests. Pragmatic abstention arises from the belief that an individual vote has limited impact on electoral outcomes. These categories highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of abstention, which requires targeted and contextually appropriate interventions.

The General Elections Commission (KPU), as the electoral management body, holds a strong legal mandate to reduce abstention rates and enhance voter participation. Law No. 10/2016 on Pilkada, specifically Article 84 paragraph (1), requires the KPU to conduct public outreach on electoral stages and procedures in order to improve voter awareness. Article 86 paragraph (1) further mandates collaboration with local governments, civil society organizations, and the media to increase voter participation.

A recurring challenge in Indonesian Pilkada is persistently low voter participation accompanied by high abstention rates. Both the government and the KPU continue to face difficulties in formulating effective measures to reduce abstention in national and local elections. In the context of the Bima City Pilkada held five years earlier, voter participation played a crucial role in conferring legitimacy upon elected regional leaders. Strong participation also reflects democratic maturity at the local level. Therefore, continuous efforts, including improved electoral facilitation, are necessary to strengthen public participation.

In Bima City, abstention rates in previous Pilkada elections indicate a concerning trend. Several contributing factors include insufficient public outreach, distrust toward candidates, limited civic literacy regarding the importance of elections, high mobility among young voters who often reside outside the region on election day, and the presence of residents working abroad. These issues require special attention from the Bima City KPU as the institution responsible for electoral administration.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Vote Counts in the 2018 Bima City Mayoral Election

District	Final Voter List (DPT)	Voters Who Cast Ballots
Asakota	22,653	18,276
Mpunda	21,513	18,311
Raba	26,829	23,266
Rasanae Barat	21,097	17,304
Rasanae Timur	12,861	11,143
Total	104,953	88,300

Source: KPU Bima City (2018).

These data, obtained from an analysis conducted at the Bima City KPU Office, indicate that out of 104,953 registered voters in the 2018 Pilkada, a total of 88,300 voters exercised their voting rights. This figure represents an overall voter turnout rate of 84.13%, which is categorized at the national level as high electoral participation, given that the minimum turnout benchmark established by the Indonesian KPU is 77.5%.

A closer examination of voter turnout across administrative districts reveals significant variation. Raba District recorded the highest turnout, with 23,266 voters out of 26,829 registered voters, while Asakota District had the lowest turnout, with 18,276 voters out of 22,653 registered voters. Although overall turnout in the 2018 Bima City Pilkada can be classified as relatively high, this inter district disparity underscores the need for more context specific outreach strategies and voter segmentation by electoral management bodies, particularly the Bima City KPU.

Several factors contributed to abstention and lower voter participation. Some individuals were unable to vote due to death shortly before election day, while high population mobility, particularly among residents working outside the city, resulted in many voters being absent during the election. In addition, technical issues such as duplicate entries in the Final Voter List (DPT) created administrative problems and reduced public trust in the electoral process (Amahami, 19 May 2025).

To address these challenges, the Bima City KPU implemented a range of strategies aimed at reducing abstention, including face to face outreach, segmented voter education, the use of social media platforms, the installation of electoral information materials, and the involvement of community leaders, religious figures, youth leaders, cultural practitioners, and

Democracy Volunteers. These strategies align with preventive, curative, preservative, and adaptive approaches designed to deliver comprehensive political education, increase public awareness, and expand the dissemination of electoral information. Such collaborative efforts are expected to foster a more participatory, inclusive, and integrity driven electoral environment.

To further reduce abstention, voter outreach must be intensified and strategic communication strengthened, particularly with regard to local elections and the importance of voter participation in ensuring their success. Enhancing public literacy about the electoral process can foster a stronger sense of civic responsibility, positioning community members as active contributors to the successful implementation of regional elections in Bima City.

2. Result

In the implementation of the 2024 Regional Head Election (Pilkada), the Bima City General Elections Commission (KPU) adopted the theme “*Matupa, Mataho Maraso*” as the guiding principle for all stages of the electoral process. This theme functions not only as a slogan but also reflects the broader vision of the Bima City KPU to deliver a high quality local election grounded in the principles of enlightenment, integrity, and transparency within the democratic process.

According to Mr. Suaeb, Chair of the Bima City KPU, the tagline carries profound meaning. *Matupa* signifies an enlightening election that educates not only election organizers but also the electorate. *Mataho* denotes goodness, symbolizing integrity throughout the entire electoral process, while *Maraso* represents cleanliness, embodying a commitment to ensuring elections that are free from fraud or ethical violations. He emphasized that the Pilkada must serve as momentum for producing leaders who are intelligent, capable, ethical, and clean (KPU Bima City, 19 May 2025).

Aligned with this overarching theme, the Bima City KPU formulated a series of outreach strategies to ensure that the Pilkada is not only participatory but also educative. These initiatives aim to reduce abstention rates and enhance public awareness regarding the importance of exercising voting rights. The strategies include direct outreach conducted by the

Bima City KPU and segmented voter education programs tailored to different demographic groups.

Voter Education and Electoral Outreach by the Bima City KPU

In fulfilling its mandate as an election management body, one of the key efforts undertaken by the Bima City General Elections Commission (KPU) to reduce voter abstention (golput) is the implementation of electoral outreach programs. Electoral outreach refers to activities conducted by the KPU to disseminate information regarding the Regional Head Election (Pilkada), including election schedules, polling locations, and voting procedures. The primary objective of these initiatives is to ensure that all segments of society are informed about and understand the electoral process, thereby encouraging citizens to exercise their voting rights.

Based on an interview with Mr. Suaeb, Chair of the Bima City KPU, the main strategy for reducing abstention is the optimization of outreach and voter education programs. He emphasized that prior to the voting stage, grassroots level election organizers were instructed to provide substantive political education. This education is aimed not only at delivering basic information, such as election dates or the number of candidate pairs, but also at fostering political awareness among citizens.

Outreach is positioned as a strategic approach to building political awareness within the community. It is carried out through both direct and indirect methods, including face to face sessions in which KPU officers actively engage with communities through neighborhood forums, door to door outreach, and visits to educational institutions, village activities, community groups, and civic organizations. During these activities, information is delivered directly by commissioners or technical staff and supported by visual materials such as brochures and information boards. According to Ms. Yety Safriaty, Head of the Division for Election Technical Implementation at the Bima City KPU, face to face outreach represents an essential method for improving public understanding of the voting process. Through simulations and on site technical demonstrations, citizens are guided on proper ballot marking procedures, the function of Form

C6, and voter flow at polling stations, thereby preparing them to vote more confidently on election day (KPU Bima City, 20 May 2025).

In addition to face to face outreach, the use of social media and electronic media serves as a crucial strategy for reaching voters more widely and effectively. The KPU utilizes various digital platforms, including its official website (<http://kota-bima.kpu.go.id>), the Facebook page “KPU Kota Bima,” the Instagram account @kpukotabima, and the YouTube channel “KPU Kota Bima,” as channels for disseminating electoral information. In an interview with Mr. Amirulmukminin, Head of the Division for Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources, social media was identified as an essential tool for delivering political education to the public. Disseminated content includes digital posters, infographics, short videos, and live streamed broadcasts, all uploaded through the official Bima City KPU accounts (KPU Bima City, 19 May 2025).

Furthermore, the installation of Electoral Outreach Media (APS) serves as another strategy to expand the reach of electoral information. Various visual materials, such as banners, billboards, and posters, are placed in strategic locations in both urban centers and peripheral areas to convey messages encouraging voter participation, informing the public about election schedules, and promoting political awareness and neutrality. According to Ms. Yety Safriaty, the placement of APS complies with KPU zoning regulations. She noted that APS distribution is conducted evenly across the city and is integrated with face to face outreach to ensure that messages are effectively received by all community groups.

The involvement of community leaders and religious figures also constitutes a key strategy employed by the Bima City KPU to enhance voter participation and reduce abstention during the 2024 Pilkada. This approach is based on the understanding that such figures possess strong emotional and social proximity to local residents, which increases the credibility and acceptance of the messages they convey. According to Mr. Suaeb, raising public awareness is not solely the responsibility of election organizers but requires collaboration with candidate pairs, political parties, religious leaders, cultural figures, and other relevant stakeholders.

Voter Education Conducted by the Bima City General Election Commission (KPU)

Voter education represents a strategic initiative of the Bima City General Election Commission (KPU) to cultivate an informed, critical, and responsible electorate. Unlike general outreach activities that primarily deliver technical information, voter education emphasizes political awareness and democratic values. To achieve this objective, the KPU employs a segmentation-based approach, targeting first-time voters, young voters, women, persons with disabilities, digital communities, marginalized groups, community leaders, and religious figures.

First-time voters reported substantial benefits from educational activities conducted directly in schools and through simulation-based learning. As expressed by Risty Nafisah, "The voter education provided by the KPU was very helpful, especially for someone like me who is voting for the first time." For young voters, digital content proved particularly effective. According to Rismansyah, "The KPU made extensive use of social media for voter education, and it was highly effective. Short videos and informative posts helped us understand the regional election. Young people felt included and were no longer indifferent."

Women voters also responded positively. Yuli Wahyuningsih stated that forums dedicated to women such as PKK activities and religious study groups were instrumental: "These approaches helped many women understand that their vote is as valuable as men's and should not be underestimated." For persons with disabilities, voter education was facilitated through inclusive media and disability-friendly polling stations. As highlighted by Dedi Pranata, a representative of the disability community, "The KPU did not only provide information but also offered specific educational support for persons with disabilities."

Community leaders likewise played a significant role. Suwardin, one of the local leaders, remarked, "Voter education is most effective when community leaders are involved. The KPU has done this well. We were given clear materials, which we then conveyed to the community."

In addition, the Bima City KPU engaged Democracy Volunteers (Relawan Demokrasi/Relasi) as strategic partners to broaden the reach of voter education. As emphasized by Amirulmukminin, Head of the Division for Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources, "Democracy Volunteers are our partners in disseminating voter education."

They operate directly within communities from Islamic boarding schools, campuses, and schools to youth and women's groups."

Through these comprehensive strategies, the Bima City KPU successfully implemented inclusive voter education and outreach programs, strengthened political literacy, and contributed to reducing abstention rates during the 2024 regional election, thereby fostering a more participatory and integrity-based democratic process.

The Effectiveness of KPU Programs in Increasing Voter Participation in the 2024 Regional Election

The General Election Commission (KPU) of Bima City implemented a series of strategic programs that were found to be effective in increasing public participation in the 2024 regional election. Face-to-face outreach served as one of the core methods because it enabled direct interaction, clear information delivery, and technical simulation of the voting procedures. According to the Chair of KPU Bima City, Suaeb, direct engagement helps build a deeper understanding among voters, while community leader Suwardin emphasized that this method provides space for citizens to ask questions and comprehend the electoral process more thoroughly.

In addition, digital platforms and social media were utilized to reach young voters and internet users. Amirulmukminin, Head of the Division for Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources, highlighted that educational content such as short videos, infographics, and informative posts was highly effective in capturing public attention. This observation is supported by Dinda Febriyanti, an active internet user, who noted that KPU's creative content significantly facilitated the dissemination of election-related information among younger generations.

The installation of election information media (APS) also proved effective, as it delivered visual messages in strategic locations. Yety Safriaty, Head of the Technical Division for Election Administration, explained that APS materials were distributed evenly, including in areas with historically low participation rates. Citizens such as Fitriani acknowledged that the information conveyed through these materials was concise and easy to understand. Another

significant initiative was the involvement of community and religious leaders. Chairperson Suaeb stressed that these figures possess strong moral authority, which helps ensure that educational messages are more readily accepted. Religious leader A. Kisman further asserted that faith-based approaches strengthened voters' confidence to participate in the election.

KPU also implemented a segmented voter education program targeting eight key groups: first-time voters, youth, women, persons with disabilities, internet users, marginalized communities, community leaders, and religious leaders. According to Amirulmukminin, this segmentation allowed for more precise and contextually tailored dissemination of information. Furthermore, the involvement of Democracy Volunteers (Relasi) expanded the reach of voter education and enhanced communication with local communities.

Overall, these programs were considered effective because they integrated direct, digital, visual, segmented, and participatory approaches through collaboration with influential community figures and volunteer networks. This combination of strategies enabled KPU Bima City not only to increase voter participation but also to strengthen the quality of political awareness during the 2024 regional election.

Table 2. Comparison of Voter Statistics in the 2018 and 2024 Elections

District	Registered Voters (2018)	Valid Voters (2018)	Registered Voters (2024)	Valid Voters (2024)
Asakota	22,653	18,276	25,422	21,332
Mpunda	21,513	18,311	23,965	19,854
Raba	26,829	23,266	29,245	24,760
Rasanae Barat	21,097	17,304	21,523	17,770
Rasanae Timur	12,861	11,143	14,199	12,410
Total	104,953	88,300	114,351	96,126

Source: KPU Bima City (2018 and 2024)

Based on the table above, voter participation in the 2018 and 2024 regional elections shows noteworthy dynamics. In 2018, the Final Voter List (DPT) consisted of 104,953 registered voters, with 88,300 valid voters, equivalent to a participation rate of 84.13%. In 2024, the DPT increased to 114,351, with 96,126 valid voters, resulting in a participation rate of 84.04%.

Despite an absolute increase of 9,398 voters, the percentage rate declined slightly by 0.09%. Nevertheless, this figure remains high, exceeding the national participation benchmark set by KPU RI at 77.5%.

Variations also occurred at the district level. Asakota District, which previously recorded a low participation rate in 2018, experienced a significant improvement in 2024, with valid voters increasing from 18,276 to 21,332 indicating the success of targeted strategies. Conversely, districts such as Mpunda and Rasanae Barat experienced slight declines, though the changes were not substantial. According to Amirulmukminin, despite the minor decrease of 0.09%, Bima City maintained the second-highest participation rate in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), following Dompu. He associated the slight decline with the increased mobility of young people, many of whom pursue education outside the region or work abroad. Similarly, Yety Safriaty explained that several previously low-performing areas showed significant improvement, demonstrating the positive impact of KPU's strategies.

In conclusion, voter participation in the 2024 Bima City regional election remained stable at a high level, despite the absence of significant growth. The ability of KPU to maintain this participation rate underscores the effectiveness of its outreach and education programs, although further evaluation is needed in districts where participation remains stagnant or has declined.

Supporting Factors for Public Participation

The strong institutional commitment of the Bima City General Elections Commission (KPU Kota Bima) constitutes a primary factor in enhancing voter participation. The Chair of KPU Kota Bima, Mr. Suaeb, emphasized that participation should not be assessed solely in numerical terms but also through the quality of citizens' awareness in exercising their voting rights in a rational manner. This commitment is reflected in various innovations, including digital based outreach, the production of educational content, the involvement of Democracy Volunteers (Relawan Demokrasi), field based activities, and targeted visits to traditional communities and peripheral areas. A community member, Mr. Suwardin, acknowledged that information

disseminated through the KPU's social media platforms improved his understanding of the electoral process.

The involvement of community leaders and religious figures serves as another key supporting factor. According to Mr. Suaeb, their engagement carries emotional and cultural significance, as their close proximity to local residents increases acceptance of electoral messages. In an interview with the Head of the Division for Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources of KPU Kota Bima, Mr. Amirulmukminin stated that Democracy Volunteers help extend outreach efforts to hard to reach voter segments, such as women, persons with disabilities, and first time voters. A female Democracy Volunteer, Ms. Suci Ramadani, noted that voter education targeting women is conducted directly to ensure that they understand their strategic role in local elections.

The utilization of social media further broadens access to rapid and interactive information. Ms. Yety Safriaty, Head of the Technical Division for Election Management, highlighted that social media has been particularly effective in reaching younger voters through creative yet educational content. Consistent with this view, Mr. Amirulmukminin observed a positive impact reflected in increasing political awareness among young voters, who have become more proactive in seeking information, engaging in outreach forums, and disseminating electoral messages. A young voter, Mr. Rismansyah, also expressed that voting is now perceived as a civic responsibility that is central to shaping the region's development trajectory.

Overall, the high level of participation in the 2024 Bima City local election was supported by the strong commitment of the KPU to implementing innovative outreach efforts, both face to face and digital, alongside the active involvement of community leaders, religious figures, and Democracy Volunteers who effectively reached diverse voter segments. The strategic use of social media significantly improved access to information, particularly among young voters whose political awareness continues to increase. The synergy between the KPU and community actors has strengthened voter education and sustained voter participation at a consistently high level.

Inhibiting Factors of Public Participation

The level of public participation in the 2024 Bima City regional election continued to be constrained by several key factors. First, low political literacy remained the most significant limitation, as reflected in the limited understanding among citizens regarding electoral stages, candidates' visions and missions, and the distinction between local elections (pilkada) and legislative elections. According to Yety Safriati, Head of the Technical Division for Election Administration, issues related to political literacy are highly complex. She stated, "Many people do not even know the difference between pilkada and legislative elections." Similarly, Rusmadi, a member of the Asakota District Election Committee (PPK), explained, "We often encounter residents who vote simply because their neighbors asked them to, without knowing who the candidates are." This lack of political literacy weakens rational decision making among voters.

Political apathy and disappointment toward previous leaders also contributed to declining participation. Many residents perceived politics as a domain of unfulfilled promises, which fostered distrust toward electoral processes. Amirulmukminin, Head of the Division for Voter Education, Community Participation, and Human Resources, noted that many citizens believed candidates only engaged with the public during campaign periods and became absent afterward. This sentiment was reinforced by PPK Asakota officer Rusmadi, who stated, "People say, why should we vote? Our previous leader produced no results." Such expressions indicate the presence of unresolved political dissatisfaction that discourages electoral engagement.

Another inhibiting factor was limited time availability combined with economic pressure. A portion of the community chose to continue working or trading on election day in order to maintain their daily income. As emphasized by Yety Safriati, many residents prioritized earning a living over voting. She noted, "There are still many who prefer to trade on election day because economic needs come first." A local vendor, Kusniati, similarly shared, "I could not go to the polling station because I had to work. If I close my stall, I lose my income for the day." This economic constraint highlights the need for more flexible and inclusive approaches in planning future election days.

In summary, the factors inhibiting voter participation include low political literacy, political apathy rooted in disappointment with previous leadership, and economic pressures that

limit voter availability. These findings underscore the importance of more targeted political education, deeper and sustained public outreach, and efforts to rebuild public trust in order to ensure stronger voter engagement in future elections.

3. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the Bima City General Elections Commission (KPU Kota Bima) has implemented a set of comprehensive strategies to enhance voter engagement. These strategies include face to face outreach, segmented voter education programs, the utilization of social media and electronic platforms, the installation of informational campaign materials, and the involvement of community leaders, religious figures, and Democracy Volunteers. The use of the tagline “*Matupa Mataho ro Maraso*” symbolizes the institution’s commitment to delivering an electoral process that is participatory and integrity based. These efforts contributed to a voter turnout rate of 84.04 percent in the 2024 local election, although this figure reflects a slight decline compared to the 84.13 percent turnout recorded in 2018.

The primary supporting factors behind this achievement include strong institutional commitment, innovation in outreach methods, the involvement of socially influential community figures, the active role of Democracy Volunteers, and increasing political awareness among young and first time voters. However, the study also identifies several persistent challenges, including low levels of political literacy among certain segments of the population, political apathy resulting from dissatisfaction with previous leadership, limited time availability and economic pressures that lead some citizens to forgo voting, and the high mobility of young voters residing outside the region.

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Collaborative Governance Between the UPT DP3AP2KB, Health Services, and Village Government in Reducing Stunting Prevalence in Sape District

Junaidin^{1*}, Arman², Muhammad Nur³, Firmansyah⁴

¹²³⁴Public Administration Department; Mbojo Bima University

* Correspondence: junaidinrufi2@gmail.com;

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of collaborative governance implemented by the UPT DP3AP2KB in partnership with health services and village governments to accelerate the reduction of stunting prevalence in Sape District, Bima Regency. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis involving key informants, including village officials, UPT staff, health workers, and posyandu cadres, and subsequently analyzed through stages of data reduction, presentation, and inductive conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that cross-sectoral collaboration has been established through institutional designs such as the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team and village deliberation forums, facilitated leadership by UPT in mediating diverse stakeholder interests, and collaborative processes emphasizing face-to-face communication, trust-building, collective commitment, and shared goals. The impact of this collaboration is reflected in the improved effectiveness of specific interventions, such as maternal and child nutrition programs, as well as sensitive interventions like empowering families at risk of stunting, although challenges remain in the form of limited nutritional literacy, insufficient technical personnel, and weak intersectoral data synchronization. The study concludes that collaborative governance in Sape District plays a significant role in reducing stunting prevalence, though its implementation is not yet fully optimal. Therefore, the research recommends strengthening village-level actors through capacity-building programs, enhancing intersectoral coordination via integrated data mechanisms, and expanding collaborative networks with private partners and social institutions to ensure a more sustainable and effective governance model.*

Keywords: *Collaborative Governance, UPT DP3AP2KB, Stunting.*

1. Introduction

Collaborative governance represents a governance paradigm that places intensive interaction between public institutions and non-state actors at the core of deliberative, consensus-oriented, and formal joint decision-making processes (Reis et al., 2021); (Yan et al., 2025). In the context of contemporary governance, which is characterized by increasing social complexity, limited state capacity, and a more critical civil society, collaborative governance emerges as a strategic mechanism that bridges public policy dynamics and community interests (The croock, 2023) (Pereverza, 2025). This model acknowledges the plurality of actors, perspectives, and resources, emphasizing the integration of roles and responsibilities that may not be symmetrical but remain adaptive to contextual challenges (Suchitwarasan et al., 2024). However, its

implementation, particularly in the fields of social and health development, reveals significant challenges alongside substantial opportunities for strengthening legitimacy, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of public policy (Yuan et al., 2022); (Saifi, 2024).

Evidence from various regions demonstrates that the success of collaborative governance strongly depends on the quality of relationships among stakeholders (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021). Several empirical studies indicate that collaborative initiatives often face critical constraints due to a lack of trust, weak governance structures, imbalanced accountability, limited resources, sectoral ego, and low levels of collective awareness (Acocella, 2022). Normatively, collaborative governance is envisioned as an equitable interaction between government institutions and non-government partners aimed at inclusive policy formulation and implementation. However, when these principles are not internalized, collaboration becomes merely procedural and fails to generate substantive transformation (Pasic, 2022); (Zee & Eveleens, 2025).

At the local level of social and health development, collaborative governance functions as a crucial instrument for enhancing accountability in village budget management (aysha, 2024). Village governments, activity management teams, and community members engage in collaborative processes that encourage active citizen participation in program evaluation and implementation (Reis et al., 2021). Collective awareness and participation in program monitoring and budget oversight reflect effective social accountability, in line with regulatory standards mandated by the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 113 of 2014 on Village Financial Management. Nevertheless, several studies emphasize the importance of improving human resource capacity and involving a broader range of stakeholders to reinforce the sustainability of collaborative governance (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022); (Maulana, 2023).

Another relevant experience concerns the implementation of the electronic health system, known as e-Kes, which has served as a collaborative model between local governments and non-government partners to digitalize health services (Abdulla et al., 2023). This collaboration has generated small wins, such as increased awareness among lower-middle-income communities regarding the importance of regular medical check-ups. Such initiatives illustrate how multi-stakeholder interactions within collaborative governance frameworks can

accelerate the diffusion of inclusive and responsive health service innovations (Carolina et al., 2025). In this context, government institutions act as catalysts and regulators, while non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations, academics, and community leaders function as partners in information dissemination, public education, and monitoring processes (Acocella, 2022); (Abdulla et al., 2023).

More broadly, collaborative governance has emerged as a response to shifting policy environments, in which non-state actors increasingly play strategic roles in shaping public agendas. The growth of policy actors, expansion of complex issues, and limited governmental capacity make multi-stakeholder synergy not merely an option but a structural necessity (Suchitwarasan et al., 2024). In a post-pandemic context and within efforts toward economic recovery, collaborative governance offers significant potential to promote community empowerment, particularly among economically vulnerable groups. Public trust in government gradually increases alongside visible state commitments in strengthening strategic policies, enhancing economic resilience, and improving inclusive public sector management (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022).

Thus, collaborative governance is not merely a technical approach in public administration, but also a philosophical framework that embodies policy ethics based on collectivity and shared responsibility. Social and health development are the most relevant fields of practice, as both directly affect the quality of life of communities (Firdaus et al., 2024). In this regard, the collaborative governance initiative between the Technical Implementation Unit (UPT) of the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning (DP3AP2KB) with health services and village governments in Sape District, Bima Regency, is a strategic effort aimed at accelerating the reduction of stunting prevalence. This collaboration goes beyond institutional synergy and involves participatory approaches that integrate technical, structural, and socio-cultural roles at the grassroots level (Firman et al., 2023). The central focus is to strengthen specific and sensitive interventions, particularly through maternal and child health services, improved nutritional intake for toddlers, and empowerment of families at risk of stunting across all villages in Sape District (Lilis et al, 2024).

According to data from the Bima District Health Office, stunting prevalence has fluctuated significantly. In 2020, the prevalence was recorded at 24.59%, declining to 18.2% in 2021, and decreasing further to 13.8% in 2022. However, the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) reported a sharp increase to 36.7%, suggesting either data disparities or changes in measurement methods, as well as signaling emerging challenges in stunting management. In 2024, the prevalence decreased again to 14%, becoming a major highlight in the 2024 General Budget Policy and Temporary Budget Priorities and Ceiling (KUA-PPAS) for the regional budget (APBD) of Bima Regency (Rifai et al, 2025).

Sape District, comprising eighteen villages, serves as a priority area for stunting reduction programs. The implementation of these programs demonstrates both notable achievements and persistent challenges, shaped by geographical characteristics, socio-economic conditions, and varying levels of community awareness. The Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning (DP3AP2KB), as the lead coordinating agency, engages multiple stakeholders, including the Health Office, village governments, and non-government partners such as the District Attorney's Office, the Baitul Maal Foundation of PLN (YBM PLN), and Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI), to deliver priority interventions, including high-protein supplementary food programs for families at risk of stunting.

High-protein supplementary food programs constitute a concrete intervention implemented simultaneously across all eighteen villages. The distributed packages, consisting of rice, milk, and eggs, are targeted at vulnerable groups, particularly pregnant women experiencing chronic energy deficiency, underweight toddlers, and families with a history of stunting. These activities involve not only logistical distribution but also nutrition education, assistance from Posyandu cadres, and regular growth monitoring. Posyandu cadres and family planning field officers (PLKB) function as frontline actors, systematically collecting field data through the SSGI dashboard and village-level stunting reduction reports.

Despite measurable progress, cross-sector collaboration continues to face considerable challenges. First, nutritional literacy and reproductive health awareness among housewives remain relatively low, particularly in coastal and remote villages. Second, intersectoral coordination is still suboptimal, especially with regard to data synchronization and follow-up

interventions. Several villages have reported delays in program implementation due to discrepancies between data held by the Health Office and DP3AP2KB, as well as limited involvement of village officials in planning processes.

Additional constraints relate to the limited availability of technical personnel specializing in nutrition and maternal and child health. Although PLKB officers and Posyandu cadres are present, their workload remains disproportionately high. Moreover, limited health infrastructure in several villages, including inadequate auxiliary health centers, restricts access to basic services. Village governments also face budgetary dilemmas, as village funds are frequently allocated to physical infrastructure development, despite Ministerial Regulation No. 8 of 2022 prioritizing stunting management. Consequently, targeted advocacy is required to promote integrated village action plans aligned with annual development and budgeting frameworks.

Partnerships with the District Attorney's Office, YBM PLN, and BRI play a significant role in expanding the scope of interventions. The District Attorney's Office contributes to institutional strengthening through legal oversight and budget monitoring, while YBM PLN and BRI provide social funding to support supplementary food procurement and family entrepreneurship training. These initiatives demonstrate that collaborative governance extends beyond public institutions to include private and religious organizations as strategic partners.

Innovative measures have also been introduced, including digital reporting systems utilizing WhatsApp and Google Forms to accelerate weekly data collection from villages. Regular cross-sector meetings, such as health center mini-workshops and district-level stunting forums, serve as essential platforms for harmonizing stakeholder perspectives and evaluating program performance.

Family involvement in stunting education is equally critical. Programs such as Toddler Family Development (BKB), Adolescent Family Development (BKR), and household-based income improvement groups (UPPKA) have been strengthened to enhance family resilience through economic empowerment and nutrition-oriented parenting education. Several villages, including Naru and Sangia, have established young mothers' groups that participate in healthy food processing training and monthly growth monitoring activities at Posyandu.

Community leaders and religious figures also play pivotal roles by disseminating health messages through local cultural and religious forums, which is particularly important given the strong influence of moral authority in Sape District. Through culturally grounded approaches, stunting is framed as a shared social responsibility rather than solely a governmental obligation.

Given the multifaceted challenges and uneven geographical conditions, collaborative governance in Sape District represents a significant case study of local adaptation in implementing national stunting reduction policies. Synergy among DP3AP2KB, health service providers, village governments, private sector actors, and civil society demonstrates that stunting reduction efforts must be conducted in a holistic and sustainable manner. Such collaboration not only supports the achievement of the district target of reducing stunting prevalence to below fourteen percent but also strengthens institutional capacity and collective awareness at the village level.

2. Result

In the landscape of public health governance, stunting is no longer understood solely as a nutritional problem but is instead recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon that requires cross-sectoral interventions involving government institutions, health professionals, the education sector, and civil society organizations. Policy instruments such as the National Action Plan for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction (RAN PASTI) emphasize the importance of a collaborative approach as the foundation for effective implementation.

Institutional Design

In the context of collaborative governance, institutional design refers to the organizational architecture established to facilitate cross-sector collaboration through both formal and informal mechanisms (Reis et al., 2021); (Yan et al., 2025). This design includes the establishment of coordination forums, acceleration teams, and technical regulations governing cooperation among actors. The principal function of institutional design is to provide a deliberative and inclusive arena for joint decision-making, emphasizing the principles of role equity, transparency, and accountability (Pereverza, 2025). In practice, institutional design determines

the legitimacy and effectiveness of collaboration, serving as the foundation that connects multiple actors with different authorities, resources, and interests in pursuing common public objectives, such as accelerating stunting reduction (Suchitwarasan et al., 2024).

Furthermore, institutional design is not limited to physical structures or administrative regulations; it also encompasses norms, operating rules, and mutually agreed procedures that regulate stakeholder interaction (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021). These elements play a crucial role in ensuring inclusivity, reducing power asymmetry, and building trust among actors (Pasic, 2022); (Acocella, 2022); (Zee & Eveleens, 2025). In the context of stunting programs, institutional design is evident in the establishment of Stunting Reduction Acceleration Teams at the district and subdistrict levels, stunting deliberation forums, and integrated planning through Village Action Plans (RAD) for stunting. This design ensures the involvement of local government, technical implementation units, community health centers, village authorities, and non-government sectors such as NGOs and private entities within a unified coordination system.

The effectiveness of institutional design is also significantly influenced by the role of facilitators in ensuring fairness and inclusiveness in collaborative processes. Facilitators act as brokers who minimize the dominance of particular actors, maintain balanced participation, and mediate potential conflicts of interest. In the absence of such roles, collaborative forums risk becoming symbolic in nature and lacking substantive impact.

The findings indicate that in Sape District, the persistently high prevalence of stunting necessitates a governance model that extends beyond a sectoral approach. One prominent policy innovation is the implementation of collaborative governance that emphasizes strategic partnerships among the UPT DP3AP2KB, health service units, and village governments. This collaboration is not merely administrative or formal in character; rather, it is constructed through an institutional design that enables deliberative, participatory, and consensus-oriented interactions among actors. Accordingly, institutional design functions as a regulatory and normative framework that integrates shared vision, resources, and coordination mechanisms in efforts to accelerate stunting reduction.

Institutional design within collaborative governance represents a structural and procedural arena that facilitates interaction among actors with differentiated roles, mandates, and

capacities. In Sape District, this design is manifested through the establishment of Stunting Reduction Acceleration Teams at the subdistrict and village levels, the formation of stunting deliberation forums as platforms for joint discussion, and the adoption of technical regulations aligned with national guidelines. These forums are not merely symbolic expressions of coordination; instead, they function as substantive instruments for developing cross-sectoral program convergence, such as the integration of specific nutrition interventions led by community health centers with village-level food security programs. This finding aligns with arguments that successful collaboration depends on institutional arrangements that promote equitable participation, transparency, and accountability (Karlsson et al., 2023).

However, institutional design is not static and must remain adaptive to local socio-political dynamics. Field findings indicate that although formal structures exist, such as cross-sectoral teams, the effectiveness of collaboration often depends on informal capacities, including social networks and personal relationships among actors. For example, coordination between the heads of the UPT DP3AP2KB and local health centers tends to be more effective when supported by close communication and mutual trust cultivated beyond formal meetings. This finding suggests that rigid institutional designs lacking sufficient flexibility may hinder smooth collaborative interaction. Therefore, ideal institutional arrangements must balance formal procedures with contextual adaptability in order to accelerate decision-making processes.

Another crucial dimension of institutional design concerns the involvement of facilitators who function as interest brokers, conflict mediators, and catalysts for collaboration. In Sape District, this role is predominantly assumed by the UPT DP3AP2KB, which holds a coordinating mandate in population control and family planning. Facilitators not only aggregate interests across the health sector, village authorities, and civil society organizations but also ensure the equitable and inclusive distribution of roles. Thus, a well-designed institutional framework not only structures collaboration but also strategically positions key actors to perform facilitative functions, thereby reducing power asymmetries and limiting sectoral dominance.

The institutional design governing stunting collaboration in Sape District also reflects the complexity of integrating national regulations with local capacities. The implementation of the National Action Plan for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction (RAN PASTI) requires multi-

sectoral synchronization across planning, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation stages. In practice, this process is operationalized through the formulation of Local Action Plans on stunting, which are subsequently translated into village-level planning documents. While this institutional arrangement normatively promotes policy coherence, empirical findings reveal challenges related to limited human resources, low levels of policy literacy at the village level, and weak monitoring mechanisms. Consequently, top-down institutional design must be accompanied by systematic capacity-building strategies to ensure meaningful implementation at the local level.

Collaboration among the UPT DP3AP2KB, health centers, and village governments in stunting reduction illustrates how institutional design functions as an enabling mechanism for goal alignment. Coordination forums, for instance, facilitate the harmonization of performance indicators and enable the integration of specific nutritional interventions, such as supplementary feeding, with village sanitation programs and parenting education initiatives. However, such alignment does not occur automatically and must be actively managed through deliberative mechanisms that prioritize mutual adjustment among stakeholders. This finding supports the argument advanced by Emerson et al. (2011) that effective collaboration requires clarity regarding interaction norms, communication mechanisms, and transparent decision-making procedures.

Another vital component of institutional design relates to resource arrangements, including financial, informational, and technological resources. In Sape District, the absence of integrated budget allocations frequently constrains program convergence. The UPT DP3AP2KB faces limitations in providing logistical support, while local health centers also contend with high operational workloads. As a result, collaborative forums often become arenas for resource negotiation that require strong joint commitment to resource sharing. Thus, institutional design not only delineates roles and responsibilities but also regulates how resources are mobilized, allocated, and held accountable.

From an evaluative perspective, effective institutional design must incorporate monitoring mechanisms and feedback loops to ensure the sustainability of collaboration. In Sape District, these mechanisms are implemented through quarterly evaluation forums that involve all relevant actors in assessing performance indicators and identifying implementation barriers. However, field evidence indicates that these sessions often remain ritualistic and generate limited

policy innovation. This condition highlights the need for improvements in institutional design to transform evaluation forums from administrative reporting exercises into platforms for collective learning and strategic adaptation.

Facilitative Leadership

Collaborative governance theory emphasizes the participation of public, private, and civil society actors in collective decision-making through deliberative and consensual mechanisms (Abdulla et al., 2023). The model underscores that the effectiveness of collaboration is shaped by starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and sustained collaborative processes (Kerman, et al., 2023); . Within this framework, facilitative leadership is not merely an administrative function but entails the capacity to mediate interactions, manage conflict, and build trust among actors. In the case of the UPT DP3AP2KB in Sape District, facilitative leadership is manifested through cross-sector coordination that enables interaction among village governments, community health centers, Posyandu cadres, and non-governmental entities, thereby fostering an adaptive collective orientation toward field dynamics.

The first indicator of collaborative processes, according to Ansell and Gash, is face-to-face dialogue. In practice in Sape District, direct dialogue functions as a strategic instrument for constructing an initial shared understanding of problem definitions, intervention priorities, and role distribution. Facilitative leaders from the UPT DP3AP2KB play a pivotal role by creating egalitarian communication spaces in which all actors have equal opportunities to express their perspectives. Dialogue occurs not only through formal forums but also through informal mechanisms such as field visits, community meetings, and intensive digital communication. These approaches strengthen trust-building processes and mitigate resistance to policies that may be perceived as top-down.

Trust constitutes a prerequisite for successful collaboration. In the Sape context, facilitative leaders promote transparency in information sharing, including data on stunting prevalence, village-level nutrition risk mapping, and program progress updates. This openness enhances policy legitimacy and encourages village participation in supporting intervention programs. Facilitative leadership also adopts a dialogical approach to negotiating divergent

interests, such as reconciling tensions between village infrastructure priorities and budget allocations for nutrition-sensitive programs. Over time, this trust develops into collective commitment, as reflected in the signing of stunting deliberation agreements and the allocation of Village Funds for nutrition-related initiatives.

Cross-sector collaboration is frequently characterized by latent conflict, including divergent perceptions regarding role distribution or the dominance of particular sectoral perspectives. Facilitative leadership functions as a mediating force that manages conflict constructively by transforming potential fragmentation into opportunities for synergy. In practice, facilitative leaders employ interest-based negotiation rather than positional bargaining. Actors are encouraged to identify shared fundamental objectives, particularly the reduction of stunting, as a focal point for convergence rather than becoming entrenched in narrow sectoral agendas. As a result, distributive conflicts can be transformed into integrative forms of collaboration.

Facilitative leadership also extends beyond technical coordination by guiding collaboration toward a shared understanding of the multidimensional nature of stunting. Through advocacy and educational forums, facilitative leaders integrate health, social, and economic dimensions into policy narratives. This process helps reframe the perspectives of village actors, shifting from viewing stunting solely as a medical issue to recognizing it as a broader human development challenge requiring multidimensional intervention. Such shared understanding fosters a long-term orientation and strengthens the resilience of collaborative arrangements amid changes in political or policy contexts.

Effective collaboration further requires innovation in communication mechanisms. Facilitative leaders in Sape District have initiated the use of accessible technologies, such as cross-sector WhatsApp groups, to support rapid coordination, program monitoring, and the dissemination of best practices. In addition, integrated village meetings consolidate agendas related to health, family planning, and women's empowerment within a single deliberative forum. These innovations not only improve efficiency but also reinforce integrated cross-sector programming, thereby contributing to more targeted and effective intervention outcomes.

Impacts of Collaboration

The impacts of collaboration within collaborative governance for stunting reduction are not measured solely by procedural outputs, such as the number of meetings held or memoranda of understanding signed, but rather by substantive changes in intervention effectiveness, institutional capacity building, and human development outcomes (Sentongo et al., 2021). In the context of Sape District, the partnership established among DP3AP2KB, health services through community health centers (UPT Puskesmas), and village governments represents a synergistic practice that integrates formal mandates, resources, and social capital into a unified configuration of collective action. Collaboration thus functions not only as an administrative response but also as a strategic instrument that integrates specific interventions, such as nutritional supplementation, with nutrition-sensitive approaches targeting socioeconomic determinants, education, and caregiving practices. As a result, collaboration generates not only short-term outcomes in reducing stunting prevalence but also strengthens sustainable public health governance mechanisms.

One of the most significant impacts of this collaboration is improved program synchronization among DP3AP2KB, which focuses on family empowerment and reproductive health, health services that implement nutrition-specific interventions, and village governments that manage community-based programs. Prior to the optimization of collaborative mechanisms, stunting prevention initiatives often operated in sectoral and fragmented ways, limiting their capacity to disrupt the underlying determinants of malnutrition. However, through stunting deliberation forums and sustained coordination mechanisms, sectoral orientations have shifted toward an integrative approach in which each actor performs roles aligned with core competencies within a shared framework of objectives. This shift is evident in integrated, data-driven planning processes and the use of stunting dashboards that facilitate rapid, responsive, and evidence-based decision-making.

Collaboration has also generated structural impacts by strengthening the social infrastructure that underpins stunting reduction efforts. DP3AP2KB functions as a facilitator in reinforcing family roles through early childhood family development programs, including Bina Keluarga Balita. Village governments allocate Village Funds to support active Posyandu services,

procure anthropometric equipment, and provide training for community health cadres. Health services contribute through programmatic innovations such as prenatal classes, supplementary feeding initiatives, and community-based nutritional screening. The cumulative impact of this integration is expanded service coverage, both in quantitative terms, such as increased frequency of Posyandu visits, and in qualitative terms, including improved accuracy of measurement data and child growth monitoring. Furthermore, access to health education becomes more inclusive through family-centered approaches, fostering a paradigm shift from curative to preventive health practices.

The most fundamental impact of this collaboration is reflected in changes in community caregiving practices and consumption patterns. Through coordinated educational interventions delivered by village cadres, health workers, and DP3AP2KB facilitators, family nutrition literacy has increased significantly. These educational activities are no longer one-directional but are dialogical and practice-oriented, incorporating live demonstrations of preparing healthy meals using locally sourced ingredients. Consequently, awareness of the First One Thousand Days of Life has intensified, contributing to improved dietary behaviors among pregnant women, increased rates of exclusive breastfeeding, and the prevention of child marriage. These behavioral changes demonstrate that cross-sector collaboration extends beyond administrative coordination to produce outcomes that reshape pro-health social norms.

Another important impact concerns gains in resource efficiency achieved through program convergence. Prior to the institutionalization of collaborative governance, duplication of activities across agencies frequently resulted in budget inefficiencies and weak performance indicator attainment. The establishment of coordination forums has enabled programs to be designed in a synchronized manner, thereby maximizing the utilization of Village Funds, corporate social responsibility contributions, and national social protection initiatives such as conditional cash transfer programs and food assistance schemes. This convergence not only reduces inefficiencies but also expands the reach of interventions, allowing vulnerable families to be identified and supported more effectively. The effects of convergence are evident in the integration of Posyandu services, early childhood family development activities, and maternal class programs, which now operate concurrently rather than independently.

Collaborative governance further contributes to enhanced accountability and transparency in program management. Digital reporting systems and periodic joint evaluation forums ensure that each actor maintains measurable responsibility for outcomes. This transparency strengthens public trust and fosters constructive competition among villages to accelerate stunting reduction performance. The broader implication of these accountability mechanisms is a reduced likelihood of symbolic administrative practices that prioritize formal compliance over substantive impact.

3. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of collaborative governance among the UPT DP3AP2KB, health services, and village governments in Sape District has made a tangible contribution to accelerating stunting reduction, although several structural and technical constraints remain. From an institutional design perspective, the establishment of coordination forums, the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team, and stunting deliberation mechanisms has created formal arenas that facilitate the integration of cross-sectoral programs. However, their effectiveness continues to be shaped by limited technical capacity at the village level and unequal resource allocation.

Facilitative leadership within the UPT DP3AP2KB plays a central role in fostering face-to-face communication, mediating divergent interests, and maintaining multi-actor commitment. These functions contribute to strengthening trust and reducing the potential for sectoral conflict, although they remain constrained by hierarchical bureaucratic rigidity. The collaborative process is further supported through joint meetings, open communication, and information-sharing mechanisms that promote mutual understanding. Nevertheless, in practice, these processes are still frequently characterized by top-down communication patterns that limit active participation from village-level actors.

The impacts of collaboration are evident in the improved synchronization of stunting-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions, including supplementary feeding programs, family nutrition education, and capacity strengthening for Posyandu cadres. These efforts have contributed to increased awareness among families at risk of stunting. However, cross-sectoral

integration has not yet been fully optimized, resulting in interventions that remain fragmented and partial in their overall effectiveness.

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Revisiting Women's Empowerment in the Dotuman Angon Livestock Group: A Theoretical Analysis Based on Naila Kabeer's Framework

Ahmad Kharis^{1*}, Suryo Ediyono²

¹ UIN Salatiga 1; ahmadkharis@uinsalatiga.ac.id

² Universitas Negeri Sebelas Maret Surakarta 2; ediyonosuryo@staff.uns.ac.id

* Correspondence: ahmadkharis@uinsalatiga.ac.id

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Abstract: *This study examines women's empowerment in the Dotuman Angon livestock group through the theoretical framework of Naila Kabeer, which emphasizes the interrelated dimensions of resources, agency, and achievements. The study is grounded in the understanding that empowerment is not solely an economic process, but a transformation of power relations shaped by social and cultural structures. Using a descriptive qualitative approach based on a literature review and contextual analysis, this study explores how access to resources, decision making capacity, and meaningful achievements are experienced by women within the livestock group. The findings indicate that while development programs may increase productivity and household assets, these outcomes do not necessarily translate into genuine empowerment for women when agency and control over decisions remain limited. Social norms and gendered roles continue to constrain women's choices, resulting in achievements that are often superficial rather than transformative. The study highlights the importance of applying a multidimensional and gender sensitive approach in community empowerment programs to ensure that women are not merely beneficiaries of development initiatives, but active agents in shaping their own lives.*

Keyword: Agency, Achievement, Gender, Resources, Women's Empowerment

1. Introduction

Women's empowerment within the socio-economic domain remains a central concern in discussions on sustainable development (Erhun, 2015). An examination of the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group in Jepara demonstrates how patriarchal structures continue to constrain women's agency, despite the program's stated commitment to inclusivity and participatory engagement. These limitations are evident in unequal access to resources, restricted participation in decision-making processes, and outcomes that fail to reflect transformative social change. This paper analyzes these dynamics through Naila Kabeer's theoretical framework, which emphasizes the interrelated dimensions of resources, agency, and achievements as essential components in assessing women's empowerment.

An understanding of these three dimensions forms the basis for evaluating the extent to which women in the *Dotuman Angon* group can access resources, exercise agency, and achieve meaningful outcomes within processes of social transformation. This analysis also explores the structural barriers women encounter, particularly the influence of cultural norms and power relations that limit their participation in the local economy. Through this analytical approach, the study seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of how existing social structures either impede or support ongoing empowerment initiatives.

Key factors influencing women's access to resources, including educational attainment, social support networks, and local policy frameworks, are systematically identified and examined. Policies that promote women's empowerment play a critical role in creating opportunities for active and equitable participation within the group (Akeno & Wafula, 2017). In addition, interactions among group members and the external roles of supporting institutions and development actors are analyzed to illustrate how power dynamics evolve and shape women's engagement in economic activities (Schmidt et al., 2023).

Acknowledging the importance of collaborative engagement among diverse stakeholders, this analysis underscores the need for synergistic partnerships among government institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and local communities in building a sustainable empowerment ecosystem. Efforts to promote women's empowerment cannot depend on a single sector alone; instead, they require an integrated approach that combines extension services, continuous mentoring, financial support, and supportive policy frameworks to drive meaningful social transformation (Raniga, 2022).

Through a holistic analytical approach, women's empowerment within the *Dotuman Angon* group is expected not only to improve economic well-being but also to encourage shifts in social structures toward a more inclusive and gender-equitable society. The lived experiences of women within this group may also serve as valuable references for similar initiatives in other contexts, while still recognizing the importance of local conditions and socio-cultural differences (Zuriah, 2014).

The findings of this analysis are expected to produce practical recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of women's empowerment programs within the *Dotuman Angon*

group and in other communities facing comparable challenges. These recommendations emphasize strengthening individual capacities, transforming entrenched social dynamics, and promoting equitable participatory mechanisms in community-based resource management.

Ultimately, a deeper understanding of empowerment dynamics is expected to support the development of community-based programs that are more responsive to women's needs (Latipun et al., 2012). Women's participation in decision-making processes, ownership of resources, and engagement in economic activities serve as key indicators for evaluating program success, as well as essential components for achieving substantive gender equality within the socio-economic structures of the community (Shrestha, 2014).

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth and reflective examination of Naila Kabeer's perspectives on women's empowerment within the development framework. This approach was selected because it allows for the exploration of experiential, value-based, and meaning-oriented dimensions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods alone. The primary sources consist of Naila Kabeer's scholarly works, particularly those addressing women's empowerment, agency, and social structures, which are critically examined using content analysis techniques. Additional supporting literature, including books and peer-reviewed journal articles, is also consulted to enrich the theoretical and contextual understanding of Kabeer's framework.

The analytical process was conducted in several stages, beginning with a thorough rereading of the primary texts to identify central themes such as access to resources, decision-making, and shifts in consciousness. These themes were then categorized and examined within the broader socio-economic context of women in developing countries. Data validity was strengthened through the triangulation of theoretical sources and sustained engagement with the existing literature. This approach enabled a holistic interpretation of Kabeer's ideas and illustrated how empowerment theory evolves dynamically in response to challenges such as globalization, poverty, and gender inequality.

2. Research Findings

2.1 Philosophical Foundation of Women's Empowerment in the *Dotuman Angon* Livestock Group: A Theoretical Study from Naila Kabeer's Perspective

Ontological Aspect

The ontological foundation of women's empowerment is rooted in an understanding of women's social existence as agents of change (Stromquist, 2015). Empowerment is not merely a process of skill enhancement or increased access to resources, but a fundamental transformation from a condition of powerlessness to one of autonomy, in which women possess control over decisions that shape their lives (Sahu, 2016). Within this framework, it is essential to examine how social and cultural structures shape empowerment processes, as well as how women utilize available resources to achieve autonomy (Osamor & Grady, 2016). In the context of the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group, women's empowerment reflects a dynamic interaction between individual agency and collective community efforts in generating positive social change.

In practice, women's empowerment within livestock group settings continues to encounter substantial challenges. Women are frequently positioned in traditional roles as domestic actors, confined to household responsibilities and activities perceived as natural extensions of their gender roles. This situation reflects unequal power relations in which men dominate access to resources, public spaces, and strategic decision-making processes (Horley & Clarke, 2016). Addressing these conditions requires collective efforts to transform prevailing paradigms by actively involving women in all aspects of livestock group management. Through such inclusive engagement, women are expected to make meaningful contributions to decision-making processes and to the economic development of the community.

From an ontological perspective, women's empowerment embodies the transformation of social relations, shifting women from passive objects of development to active subjects who shape their own life trajectories, while simultaneously challenging social structures that perpetuate inequality. This perspective aligns with Naila Kabeer's framework, which asserts that empowerment involves not only expanding access to resources but also restructuring power relations that sustain gender inequality. Consequently, empowerment processes must ensure

women's active participation at every stage, from planning to implementation, in order to achieve sustainable and meaningful outcomes (Beti et al., 2023).

Epistemological Aspect

The epistemological dimension of women's empowerment concerns the ways in which knowledge about inequality, subordination, and social change is produced, validated, and interpreted (Salahuddin & Ahmad, 2017). Within the context of livestock groups, qualitative approaches are particularly important for capturing women's lived experiences. Methods such as life narratives, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation enable a more authentic understanding of women's realities. Many of the social structures that restrict women's participation are not readily visible through quantitative data, as they are embedded in norms, everyday language, and patterns of interaction that have become socially normalized (Heilmann, 2021).

Through this methodological orientation, the epistemological discourse on empowerment challenges overly simplistic generalizations (Bode & Moro, 2021). Instead, attention is directed toward understanding the meanings women attribute to their social actions, particularly how they interpret opportunities, constraints, and transitions within their life trajectories. Recognizing the diversity of local experiences and contextual conditions is essential for developing a comprehensive and unbiased understanding of empowerment, irrespective of broader structural dynamics (Uddin, 2019). Accordingly, incorporating women's perspectives into both research and practice becomes crucial for designing empowerment strategies that are effective and responsive to their specific circumstances within the Dotuman Angon livestock group.

Axiological Aspect

The axiological dimension of women's empowerment highlights the values and normative goals underlying the empowerment process. At its core, women's empowerment is grounded in principles of social justice, respect for human dignity, and the recognition of women's rights to make life choices free from coercion (Karmakar & Adhikari, 2023). This process necessarily includes efforts to eliminate stigma and discrimination that hinder women's active participation in

various social and economic spheres, including livestock groups. Consequently, women's empowerment should be understood not only as an individual endeavor but also as a collective responsibility of the community to foster an environment that upholds gender equality and justice (Mishra, 2015).

Within livestock group contexts, empowerment initiatives should not be limited to increasing economic productivity or formal participation alone. More fundamentally, the objective is to cultivate a just social space in which women can access resources, participate in decision-making processes, and develop critical capacities as equal members of the community (Salomon, 2015). Accordingly, the axiology of women's empowerment within the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group underscores the importance of collaboration among community members to ensure equitable access and participation. Through participatory practices, women can be recognized as agents of change who contribute meaningfully to the collective well-being of the community (Sofi, 2015).

Empowerment strategies that focus exclusively on economic gains, such as income generation, without addressing women's bargaining power risk reproducing existing forms of subordination in new ways (Zunaida et al., 2019). Therefore, the axiological foundation of empowerment must promote critical consciousness, reinforce women's agency, and support the transformation of social structures toward genuine equality rather than merely adapting women to unequal systems. This approach requires synergy between economic and social objectives, ensuring that empowerment initiatives not only deliver material benefits but also strengthen women's social positions and decision-making power (Brenyah, 2018). This perspective is consistent with Naila Kabeer's emphasis on transforming power relations as a prerequisite for achieving substantive gender equality.

2.2. Analysis of Women's Empowerment in the *Dotuman Angon* Livestock Group from Naila Kabeer's Perspective

Analysis of Resources

Within Naila Kabeer's theoretical framework, resources function not merely as economic inputs but as structural conditions that enable the development of agency and the realization of achievements. Ownership of resources extends beyond formal or administrative possession;

more critically, it involves the ability to access, control, and utilize resources to pursue meaningful life choices. These resources encompass interrelated economic, social, and political dimensions that allow women to participate actively in decision-making processes and to enhance their overall well-being. Furthermore, effective resource management contributes to women's independence and empowerment within the context of the livestock group (Bui et al., 2023).

Empirically, the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group exhibits a gender-biased pattern of resource distribution. Although the program formally promotes community participation, women experience systematic exclusion in practice. They are frequently absent from lists of livestock recipients, training participants, and beneficiaries of production facilities, and they are often not invited to take part in planning or evaluating group activities. This exclusion is not simply a matter of individual choice but reflects the internalization of cultural norms that position women as secondary actors within productive and economic domains (Prastiwi, 2022).

Limited access to resources produces significant and far-reaching consequences. First, women lose opportunities to independently strengthen their economic capacities. Second, they are denied access to social networks that could broaden their life opportunities. Third, such exclusion reinforces persistent stereotypes regarding women's perceived inability to manage productive resources, thereby sustaining entrenched structures of inequality (Lawlis & Jamieson, 2016). Consequently, targeted interventions are required to expand women's access to resources, including specialized training programs, the development of support networks, and the implementation of policies that promote gender inclusion across all components of the livestock group initiative.

From Kabeer's perspective, conditions such as these demonstrate that the mere presence of resources within a community does not automatically result in empowerment if access to those resources is unequally distributed. Genuine empowerment occurs only when individuals, including women, possess not only physical access to resources but also socially recognized rights to use, manage, and benefit from them autonomously (Gupta & Das, 2016). Accordingly, programs such as the *Dotuman Angon* initiative must engage in critical reflection, recognizing that equitable resource distribution is not solely a technical concern but an ethical requirement for achieving egalitarian social transformation.

An examination of resource distribution within the program indicates that women's empowerment remains distant from its intended objectives. Addressing this gap requires gender-responsive interventions that reinforce mechanisms for women's inclusion at every stage of the program, including planning, implementation, and evaluation, so that empowerment extends beyond rhetoric and becomes a tangible lived experience (Hafidloh et al., 2021). A more comprehensive approach to women's empowerment in the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group must therefore involve structural reforms that support women's access to and control over resources, as well as the creation of inclusive spaces in which women can voice their perspectives and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives.

Agency Analysis

Within Naila Kabeer's theoretical framework, agency constitutes the central element of the empowerment process. Agency refers to an individual's capacity to define life goals, articulate personal interests, and make decisions that shape their own trajectories. It extends beyond the ability to choose among available options to include the power to negotiate, challenge, and create new opportunities within existing structural constraints. In the context of the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group, women's agency is frequently constrained by social norms that circumscribe their roles. Strengthening agency therefore requires the creation of supportive environments in which women can participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and develop strategies that reflect their needs and aspirations (Toochemae, 2022).

Empirical conditions within the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group reveal that women's agency faces systematic obstruction. Deeply embedded social norms that designate men as primary productive actors limit women's mobility, both physically and symbolically. Women are often restricted from engaging in activities outside the household, particularly at certain times, under justifications related to honor or safety (Rezeanu, 2015). Participation in decision-making forums, such as routine meetings or group deliberations, remains minimal and is frequently mediated through husbands or male relatives. In some instances, women who attempt to voice their perspectives are perceived as violating accepted social norms, exposing them to social pressure, exclusion, or stigmatization (Tan, 2021).

The absence of agency extends beyond limited formal participation to encompass a lack of autonomy in decision-making, self-expression, and influence over the direction of social change within the community (Chackal, 2016). In Kabeer's analysis, agency is the core of empowerment, without which access to resources loses its transformative potential and achievements become passive or imposed. Consequently, empowerment programs must be designed not only to expand women's access to resources but also to strengthen their capacity to engage actively in decision-making processes. Through such engagement, women can cultivate agency and contribute to meaningful change within existing social structures (Eger et al., 2018).

These conditions indicate that the social structure surrounding the livestock group not only governs access to resources but also determines who is entitled to aspire, plan, and act. Structures that normalize the silencing of women's voices operate as latent barriers to genuine empowerment. Strengthening women's agency therefore extends beyond technical interventions such as training or capital provision and requires deeper efforts to challenge and transform social norms and practices that prevent women from becoming decision-makers in their own lives (Burgess & Campbell, 2016).

Programs such as the *Dotuman Angon* initiative must intentionally develop mechanisms that enable women to articulate their needs and aspirations, participate fully in all group processes, and access safe spaces for negotiation and advocacy within the community. Without the institutionalization of women's agency, empowerment interventions risk remaining superficial and fail to address the deeper structures that sustain inequality (Widianto et al., 2018).

Achievements Analysis

In Naila Kabeer's framework, achievements in women's empowerment are not assessed solely through material indicators such as income growth or asset ownership. More fundamentally, achievements reflect the extent to which women are able to realize life choices they value through genuine processes of agency. Achievements represent the concrete outcomes of the interaction between resources and agency, shaping women's overall quality of life (Tripathi & Mishra, 2017). These outcomes may include improvements in education, health, and social participation, all of which contribute to broader well-being. Within the context of the *Dotuman*

Angon livestock group, achievements therefore need to be evaluated not only in economic terms but also through changes in women's social positions and self-perceptions within the community.

Empirical evidence indicates that achievements related to women's empowerment within the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group remain limited and uneven. While the program has contributed to increased livestock productivity and improved household economic conditions, these gains are not distributed equitably between men and women. Control over livestock management and the resulting economic benefits largely remains in the hands of men. Despite women's significant involvement in daily livestock maintenance, they often lack recognition and authority over the outcomes generated by their labor (Shenjere-Nyabezi, 2016).

Moreover, the limited involvement of women in program planning and evaluation means that the achievements attained do not fully reflect their needs and aspirations. Consequently, increases in community assets do not necessarily translate into greater capacity for women to shape the direction of their own lives. From Kabeer's perspective, this condition represents superficial achievement, where progress may appear statistically significant but substantively continues to reproduce gender inequality (Donnelly, 2015). It is therefore essential to develop achievement indicators that are more comprehensive and gender-sensitive, capable of capturing deeper transformations in women's lives. Such indicators must be defined through the active participation of women themselves to ensure that empowerment initiatives genuinely reflect their priorities and aspirations (Chubin et al., 2015).

In addition, prevailing social narratives within the community increasingly reinforce stereotypes of women as domestic supporters rather than as productive agents or decision-makers. This suggests that women's achievements within the livestock group largely extend traditional gender roles rather than signaling a shift toward genuinely empowering roles (Siraj, 2016). According to Kabeer, meaningful achievements in empowerment should be reflected in women's increased control over their economic, social, and political lives. Genuine achievement is therefore demonstrated not only through higher household income but through women's enhanced capacity to critically interpret social realities, participate in strategic decision-making, and live in accordance with their own values, aspirations, and choices rather than merely conforming to established norms.

Within the context of the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group, women's achievements must therefore be critically examined. The central question remains whether increased productivity has been accompanied by greater control for women over resources and decision-making, or whether it has simply reinforced male dominance in a more modern yet still gender-biased form. In conclusion, without strong agency and equitable access to resources, the achievements produced by community development programs risk remaining symbolic, altering surface conditions without challenging the deeper structures of inequality that continue to constrain women.

2.3. Choice Issues and Social Construction

Individual decisions, particularly those made by women, are often interpreted as expressions of agency (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015). From Naila Kabeeer's perspective, however, it is essential to differentiate between choices that arise from autonomous awareness and those shaped by deeply embedded social constraints. Not all choices can be regarded as indicators of empowerment, especially when decisions are made under the influence of cultural norms that restrict women's autonomy (Khader, 2016). Consequently, creating an enabling environment that provides women with access to information, resources, and social networks is crucial for expanding the range of choices available to them. Such efforts must also involve the active participation of all community members in order to transform restrictive norms and promote gender equality across multiple dimensions of social life.

The conditions within the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group clearly illustrate these dynamics. Many women appear to choose not to participate actively in the program; however, these decisions do not stem from genuine freedom of choice. Social restrictions on women's mobility, stigma toward women who are visibly active in public spaces, and low societal expectations regarding women's economic contributions collectively shape a limited framework of available options (Singh, 2013). As a result, the decision not to engage in the program reflects structurally constrained agency rather than deliberate self-determination. Addressing this issue therefore requires interventions that extend beyond improving women's access to resources to include

broader community education on the value and benefits of women's active participation. Through such efforts, more sustainable and inclusive forms of social change can be achieved.

This phenomenon demonstrates that empowerment cannot be evaluated solely by observing the outcomes of women's choices, but must instead be understood through an examination of the socio-economic conditions that shape the feasibility of those choices. The degree to which women possess fair options and genuine opportunities to direct their own life trajectories emerges as a more reliable indicator of empowerment (Medina & Herrarte, 2020). Progress toward meaningful empowerment therefore requires the dismantling of restrictive social paradigms. Such initiatives should focus not only on the redistribution of economic resources but also on the emancipation of consciousness, fostering critical awareness among women of their rights, potential, and capacity to shape their own lives (Alkhaled & Berglund, 2017). In this regard, education grounded in critical consciousness plays a vital role in strengthening women's ability to confront structural constraints.

Moreover, collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including civil society organizations, can further strengthen empowerment initiatives by creating spaces in which women can exchange experiences and develop supportive networks (Cuesta, 2021). Such collaborative efforts are important not only for enhancing individual capacities but also for transforming prevailing social norms that hinder women's advancement. The formation of solidarity networks among women thus represents a crucial step in reinforcing their social position and advancing broader goals of social justice (Afloarei, 2017). Through these networks, women can collectively navigate challenges, share strategies, and reinforce one another's roles within society. In this sense, women's empowerment becomes not merely an individual endeavor but a collective process that engages the wider community (Inneké et al., 2021).

2.4. Empowerment Dilemma: Between Good Intentions and Field Realities

Community empowerment initiatives, including livestock groups such as the *Dotuman Angon* program, are generally motivated by intentions to enhance community welfare. However, these intentions do not always translate into desired outcomes, particularly when program design and implementation fail to account for gender-based power relations. Women's participation in such

initiatives is often marginalized, despite their substantial contributions to both economic and social activities within the community. Consequently, it is essential to critically evaluate and design empowerment interventions that integrate a gender perspective in order to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes (Suartha, 2012).

In principle, empowerment programs seek to promote equal access and opportunities for all community members. In practice, however, field realities frequently demonstrate that, without critical engagement with existing social structures, such interventions may inadvertently reinforce inequality. Practices such as prioritizing men in livestock distribution, scheduling training sessions without regard for women's domestic responsibilities, and limiting discussion forums to male participants illustrate that empowerment cannot be achieved through good intentions alone (Cuesta et al., 2018). Genuine empowerment therefore requires a holistic and inclusive approach that actively involves women and other stakeholders at every stage of program planning and implementation. Such an approach enhances program responsiveness to diverse needs and contributes to more substantial improvements in community well-being.

This tension highlights the need for a more reflective and participatory orientation in corporate social responsibility and community-based empowerment programs. Women's involvement from the earliest planning stages is essential to ensure that their perspectives are meaningfully represented in strategic decision-making processes. Moreover, program facilitators must be equipped with a critical gender lens to identify and address structural barriers that often remain unrecognized (McCarthy, 2015). Meaningful empowerment extends beyond the provision of resources or skills and requires the transformation of power relations, the recognition of women's agency, and the creation of social spaces in which women can act autonomously (Han, 2016).

Strong institutional support, particularly from government bodies and relevant agencies, is therefore crucial in developing and enforcing policies that advance gender equality and women's empowerment. In the absence of firm commitments from all stakeholders, empowerment initiatives risk remaining symbolic and failing to produce substantive change (Holvoet & Inberg, 2015). It is thus important to establish frameworks that integrate gender analysis throughout all stages of empowerment programs, from planning to evaluation. By ensuring women's active

participation, such programs can address not only economic needs but also strengthen women's social and political positions within their communities (Abdullahi & Abdullahi, 2013).

2.5. Recommended Strategies Based on Kabeer's Theory

Reexamining the current dynamics within the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group, the transition toward substantive women's empowerment requires a more comprehensive strategy than the mere allocation of resources. In accordance with Naila Kabeer's framework, the three interrelated dimensions of empowerment, namely resources, agency, and achievements, must be strengthened simultaneously to establish an equitable and effective empowerment model. It is therefore essential to ensure that women not only gain access to resources but also possess the autonomy to make decisions and participate actively in all aspects of community life. Accordingly, proposed interventions should include skill development initiatives, expanded access to educational opportunities, and the facilitation of robust social networking mechanisms (Gailits et al., 2019).

The first strategic priority involves promoting a more equitable distribution of resources. Women's access to livestock management roles, educational training, and production infrastructure must be deliberately expanded, not as symbolic gestures of equality but as recognition of their legitimate rights to participate and benefit economically. Beneficiary selection processes should be restructured to mitigate underlying gender biases, while training programs must be designed to equip women with practical skills aligned with market demands, thereby enhancing their economic contributions (Kumari, 2017). In parallel, community awareness initiatives are needed to challenge prevailing attitudes and to highlight the value and potential of women's involvement in the livestock sector.

The second strategic focus centers on strengthening women's agency. This objective can be achieved through leadership development programs, the creation of inclusive deliberative spaces that allow women to express their interests, and the provision of sustained mentoring support. Enhancing women's agency through these mechanisms not only builds self-confidence but also equips women with the capacity to advocate for their rights and aspirations within broader community decision-making processes (Acquah, 2012).

The third strategic dimension involves fostering meaningful achievements that reflect changes valued by women themselves. Empowerment initiatives must therefore assess their effectiveness not only through economic indicators but also through evidence of social transformation, including increased women's participation in decision-making, greater autonomy over resources, and the emergence of more egalitarian patterns of interaction within both household and community contexts. By integrating resources, agency, and achievements in this manner, a comprehensive empowerment strategy can generate lasting and transformative outcomes for women in the *Dotuman Angon* livestock group. Such outcomes not only enhance economic well-being but also strengthen women's positions within broader social structures, enabling them to act as agents of change in their communities (Howard et al., 2008).

In the absence of cohesive initiatives that address these three core dimensions, empowerment risks remaining a rhetorical concept rather than a lived reality. Gender-sensitive and rights-based approaches must therefore be integrated throughout all phases of the program to ensure that women are not positioned merely as passive recipients of development interventions, but rather as active actors in shaping their own circumstances (Cochrane & Rao, 2019). Ultimately, the success of these strategies depends on strong collaboration among all stakeholders, including government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. Through such a holistic and inclusive approach, it is anticipated that a sustainable environment supportive of gender equality and women's empowerment can be established.

3. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Naila Kabeer's framework on women's empowerment makes a significant contribution to the pursuit of socially just development. Her conceptualization of empowerment moves beyond narrowly defined economic approaches by emphasizing the interrelated dimensions of resources, agency, and achievements. These dimensions do not operate in isolation; rather, they form a dynamic and mutually reinforcing process that enables women to make life choices previously constrained by unequal social and cultural structures.

From Kabeer's perspective, empowerment is not a linear progression but an evolving process shaped by women's experiences, negotiations, and interactions across different spheres of life.

The findings further indicate that initiatives aimed at empowering women should not be limited to expanding access to education or employment opportunities. Such efforts must also create spaces in which women can articulate their voices, build self confidence, and strengthen their bargaining power within families, communities, and broader social institutions. Consequently, inclusive development policies need to account for the complexity of women's lived experiences, including cultural and normative barriers that often remain unrecognized in formal development indicators. In this respect, Kabeer's framework serves as an important bridge between feminist theory and context sensitive development practice.

Future research should further examine the application of Kabeer's empowerment framework at the local level, particularly within Indonesia's socially and culturally diverse contexts. Community based and participatory research approaches would provide richer insights into how women confront gender inequality, respond to structural constraints, and develop strategies to navigate everyday challenges. Moreover, cross disciplinary collaboration among academics, development practitioners, and local women's organizations can contribute to more responsive, inclusive, and sustainable policy formulation.

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Conflict of Interest:

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this research. All processes from data collection to analysis and report preparation were carried out independently and free from any influence that could compromise the integrity of the research results.

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Local Power Dynamics and Procurement Politics in Bima-Dompu: Uncovering Embedded Structural Corruption

Nurlaila

¹²³⁴Public Administration Department; Mbojo Bima University

* Correspondence: lailaamin975@gmail.com;

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Abstract: *This study aims to reveal the latent structure of systemic corruption in public procurement in Bima City, Bima Regency, and Dompu Regency, reflecting a pathological convergence of state capture, neopatrimonialism, and crony capitalism. Employing a critical qualitative method with an intrinsic case study design, it integrates Foucault's governmentality, institutional corruption theory, and Baudrillard's simulacra to explain how procurement mechanisms shift from administrative tools into instruments of predatory power consolidation. Data were collected through elite interviews, legal and audit document analysis, and participatory observation, and were examined using critical discourse analysis within abductive logic. The findings show that procurement processes are hijacked through orchestrated collusion, fabricated documents, and bureaucratic manipulation legitimized by pseudo-legality. Bima City exhibits vertical rent-seeking networks; Bima Regency forms an organized project cartel, while Dompu demonstrates acute institutional decay through elite protection pacts. The study concludes that procurement corruption has evolved into an institutionalized governing regime that undermines democratic legitimacy, distorts bureaucratic ethics, and threatens the sustainability of local public governance.*

Keywords: Systemic Corruption; Public Procurement; State Capture.

1. Introduction

In the local political landscape of Bima Regency, Bima City, and Dompu Regency, the public procurement system has evolved into an arena of power domination characterized by highly manipulative budgetary politics (Baker, 2005); (Mas & Savirani, 2011); (Pertiwi et al., 2021). Beneath the rhetoric of regional autonomy and fiscal decentralization, which were initially envisioned to promote public welfare through efficient resource allocation, lies a configuration of power that fosters a mutualistic symbiosis among political elites, bureaucratic actors, and local business networks (Cahyono, 2017); (Riyadi, 2020). This condition demonstrates acute symptoms of structural corruption that is no longer incidental but institutionalized within the operational logic of local governance (Ablo et al., 2019); (Kim, 2023).

A central characteristic of this structural corruption is the emergence of state capture, whereby oligarchic actors subtly yet systematically hijack state institutions (Liu & Mikesell, 2014); (C et al., 2025). In Dompu, for instance, the budgeting process often becomes an entry point for political elites to accommodate the interests of business partners by inserting fictitious or predetermined projects. This process involves the formation of procurement cartels controlled by individuals close to the regional head or legislators, in which service providers are selected not on the basis of merit but on political proximity and patron client loyalty (Jancsics, 2013); (Mchopa et al., 2015); (Williams et al., 2017).

Such dynamics give rise to a configuration of kleptocracy, whereby public resources are appropriated by ruling elites for private wealth accumulation (Sorola et al., 2024); (Miller & Miller, 2024). Evidence from investigations conducted by the Corruption Eradication Commission and rulings of the anti corruption court indicates that several regional leaders in these areas have been implicated in procurement scandals involving shell companies or third party intermediaries. These schemes were used to seize strategic projects ranging from road construction to the procurement of medical equipment (Hessami, 2013); (Nicaise & Nicaise, 2019); (Eckersley et al., 2023). This situation is further exacerbated by weak internal and external oversight, as well as ineffective local legislatures that, rather than acting as mechanisms of checks and balances, become co opted into project sharing arrangements (Jam et al., 2025).

Rent seeking practices emerge when political and bureaucratic actors no longer prioritize public service but instead manipulate policies to extract economic rents from procurement projects. This tendency is evident in the formulation of technical regulations that are deliberately tailored to benefit specific groups (Haan, 2020); (Irasema, 2022);. ocal regulations are frequently drafted in ambiguous terms to allow flexible interpretation

during the tendering process, thereby creating opportunities for collusion and nepotism (Barker et al., 1986);(Irawan, 2015);(Pertiwi et al., 2021).

Furthermore, patrimonialism remains a dominant feature of local political culture, in which power is exercised through personal networks rather than impersonal, rule based systems. Regional leaders act as paternalistic figures who allocate projects to political cronies as rewards or as tools for consolidating power ahead of elections. This pattern is reflected in the appointment of structural officials in key technical agencies, such as the Public Works Office and the Investment and Licensing Office, both of which play central roles in managing physical development projects (Romayah et al., 2014); (Juliarso, 2019).

The consequences of cronyism include the erosion of meritocracy, declining project quality, and the deterioration of budgetary efficiency and effectiveness. Projects tend to be over budget yet low in quality, carried out by contractors who lack competence but maintain close ties with political elites. This condition directly affects public satisfaction with government services, increases distrust toward state institutions, and contributes to lower regional integrity indices (Surdin, 2016); (Muliawaty & Hendryawan, 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, these dynamics affirm the neo patrimonialism framework described by Magam and Wilson, in which the boundaries between the public and private spheres become blurred and the state is transformed into a vehicle for distributing private gains among elites. In this context, procurement systems function not as administrative instruments for achieving development objectives but as mechanisms of political transaction and local power reproduction.

From a legal standpoint, as noted by Maryanto, ambiguity between administrative and criminal sanctions in procurement regulations, such as Presidential Regulation No. 12 of 2021 and Law No. 1 of 2004 on State Treasury, exacerbates the

problem. When legal norms lack clarity, law enforcement agencies acquire broad discretionary authority that can be exploited for political purposes, including the criminalization of opponents or the protection of corrupt allies.

Empirical evidence from procurement corruption reports indicates that more than 70 percent of regional corruption cases originate in the procurement sector. In Bima City, common schemes include pre arranged tender winners, falsification of administrative documents, and manipulation of unit prices in contract documentation. Meanwhile, oversight institutions such as the Inspectorate and the Regional House of Representatives are often weak or entangled in these collusive practices.

Comprehensive restructuring of the procurement system is therefore essential at the regulatory, institutional, and cultural levels. Systemic reform should not focus solely on technical procedures but must also aim to transform political values from patronage oriented practices toward integrity based governance. Measures such as digital transparency, civil society participation, and whistleblower protection constitute critical entry points for meaningful structural change.

The urgency of this research lies in the complex dynamics of local power and budgetary politics in Bima and Dompu, which structurally create fertile conditions for corruption in public procurement. Rather than enhancing public service delivery under fiscal decentralization, the prevailing outcome is the consolidation of state capture, whereby local government institutions are appropriated by private interests through elite collusion among politicians, bureaucrats, and business cronies. These patterns reflect a chronic manifestation of kleptocracy, in which state apparatuses are transformed into predatory actors that systematically extract public resources for personal gain. This phenomenon represents not merely a moral or bureaucratic deviation but a concrete expression of institutional failure and the absence of effective mechanisms for controlling power relations, accountability, and transparency.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach to rent seeking, patrimonialism, and cronyism within the framework of structural corruption embedded in local budgetary politics and procurement systems. Unlike previous studies that separate political analysis from the technical domain of procurement, this research connects power relations with the logic of rent extraction within procurement arenas. It demonstrates how local patron client networks hijack budgetary mechanisms through selective allocation strategies and politically motivated project distribution. By employing neo patrimonialism and institutional corruption theory, this study offers a new theoretical and empirical lens for understanding corruption not merely as a series of procedural violations, but as a socio political system that is constructed, reproduced, and sustained by local elites within oligarchic and exploitative power relations.

2. Result

Rent-Seeking Politics in Regional Budget Arenas

The phenomenon of rent-seeking in the public procurement systems of three regions in West Nusa Tenggara Bima City, Bima Regency, and Dompu Regency does not merely indicate administrative deviation but reflects a pathological configuration of power that has become systemically institutionalized. In this context, corruption does not occur in an institutional vacuum; rather, it is the outcome of long-standing coalitions involving political actors, technical bureaucracies, local business networks, and compromised law enforcement institutions. Rent-seeking has transformed into an informal mode of governance that co-opts public procurement mechanisms to serve elite interests rather than the public good (Firmansyah et al, 2025).

One of the most prominent cases affirming this analysis is the conviction of Muhammad Lutfi, former Mayor of Bima (2018–2023). He was proven to have engaged in corruption in multiple government procurement projects, accepted illicit gratuities

amounting to billions of rupiah, and orchestrated the distribution of rents by using bureaucratic apparatuses as oligarchic instruments. This case illustrates how rent-seeking practices have fused entirely with the local power infrastructure, where Lutfi functioned not only as a perpetrator but also as the principal architect of an integrated rent-distribution system embedded within regional institutions,

Lutfi's *modus operandi* demonstrates the systemic operation of hierarchical and vertically structured rent-seeking logic. He exploited his position to pre-arrange project winners even before tenders were formally announced. Manipulative actions such as securing technical documents from the Public Works Office (PUPR) and the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), designing tender winner simulations, and organizing fee distribution to internal government networks became routine practices within the patronage-based local power scheme. In this arrangement, bureaucracy ceased to function as a guardian of procedure and instead served as a loyal operator of the political will above it.

The forms of corruption identified in this case include criminal conspiracy, abuse of authority, and the acceptance of unlawful monetary and material gratification from project contractors. According to the indictment of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Lutfi violated Article 12 letter (i) and/or Article 12B of Law No. 31/1999 on the Eradication of Corruption Crime, as amended by Law No. 20/2001. The financial loss to the state was substantial, with restitution of Rp1.92 billion demanded.

Legally, Lutfi is positioned not merely as an individual offender but as a manifestation of structural corruption. He formed a core team responsible for gathering project information, preparing tender simulations, and controlling monetary flows from private actors into bureaucratic channels. In other words, he designed a pseudo-procurement system deliberately engineered to reinforce local oligarchic interests

through the systematic disregard of principles of fairness, accountability, and transparency.

The court verdict confirmed the existence of this corruption network. The Corruption Court in Mataram sentenced Lutfi to seven years in prison and imposed a fine of Rp250 million, with an additional six months' imprisonment if unpaid. He was also ordered to reimburse state losses, with the provision that his assets be seized and auctioned if he failed to comply. Although symbolically significant, this verdict also reveals the entrenched and complex nature of corruption within local governance systems.

Beyond legal violations, Lutfi's case exposes the involvement of legislative bodies in rent-seeking practices. Legislative intervention in the planning and approval of the Regional Budget (APBD) highlights a predatory consensus between the executive and legislative branches, transforming fiscal documents into rent-distribution arenas. Procurement projects become tools for political consolidation, while budget planning serves as a medium for legitimizing group interests rather than reflecting societal needs.

From a theoretical perspective, this condition is aligned with Jean Baudrillard's concept of "simulacra," wherein the formal appearance of institutional procedures becomes a hollow image masking the informal power dynamics operating behind the scenes. The procurement system in Bima City appears to follow administrative steps tendering, announcements, and evaluations yet these stages are controlled by closed and exclusive power relations. The substantive purpose of procurement as a development instrument is replaced by the logic of rent accumulation and political loyalty transactions.

At this juncture, local democracy experiences structural hijacking. Development projects intended for welfare distribution are reduced to political commodities. Civil society, which should play a monitoring role, is marginalized due to limited information

access and weak legal protection. Within entrenched patronage systems, power not only shapes policies but also creates destructive incentives that reproduce itself through project rents and electoral concessions.

In Bima Regency, rent-seeking practices consolidate through a model of structural kleptocracy. The procurement of a Rp3.9-billion vessel by the Transportation Office which resulted in state losses of Rp777 million provides concrete evidence of how bureaucratic structures are reduced to machines of rent accumulation. Actors not only manipulated tenders but also constructed institutional shields against internal audits, reinforcing the notion that oversight functions have become ritualistic rather than substantive.

The relationship between political authority and the business sector forms a mutualistic symbiosis through cronyism and socially embedded distribution of projects. Contractor selection is determined by kinship and loyalty networks rather than by technical competence. Procurement thus becomes an arena of rent reproduction and a mechanism of political control through selective concessions to cronies.

Within a state-capture analytical framework, procurement institutions in Bima Regency have lost their epistemic autonomy. Institutional functions such as local government agencies (SKPD), the Procurement Service Unit (ULP), and the Inspectorate no longer operate as normative entities safeguarding accountability but as procedural legitimizers of pre-engineered rents. Even LPSE and SPSE symbols of transparency are manipulated to create a veneer of accountability.

Patrimonialism permeating local democracy in Bima Regency demonstrates the conversion of electoral authority into a mechanism for distributing economic rents. Public offices are no longer associated with service but with access to budgetary resources. Regional heads, structural officials, and political campaign teams form a distributive configuration of power operating within a closed ecosystem. Horticulture and social

assistance projects are not immune to rent manipulation, reinforcing the argument that administrative functions have been supplanted by the logic of accumulation

The persistent repetition of corruption schemes, price mark-ups, document falsification, fee sharing indicates not only system leakage but a failure of bureaucratic reform. This affirms the neo-institutionalist argument on institutional isomorphism in corruption, wherein adaptation to legal pressures generates more sophisticated and institutionalized forms of wrongdoing.

Dompu Regency presents the most complex variant of rent-seeking in procurement, characterized by the convergence of bureaucratic, private, and law enforcement powers into a single network of structural impunity. Cases such as fictitious receipts at the Transportation Office, vessel tender manipulation at the Marine and Fisheries Office, and metrology equipment procurement at the Industry and Trade Office highlight that rent practices are not isolated actions but strategies of power reproduction permeating all governance dimensions.

Syarifudin, former Transportation Office head, not only abused administrative authority but also created validation spaces for fictitious procurement. Violations occurred not merely at the project execution level but were embedded within planning and reporting systems. In Foucauldian terms, this represents a form of “deviant governmentality,” where public administration techniques are hijacked for private interests through state apparatuses.

Rent domination is also evident in the procurement of Dompu’s Community Health Center, where the Commitment-Making Officer and contractors orchestrated document manipulation and budget engineering. This symbiosis transcends conventional gratification and evolves into a business-political ecosystem detached from accountability logic. Patronage becomes the primary mechanism for selecting project partners, with political intimacy outweighing principles of open competition.

The District Attorney's Office in Dompu publicly regarded as "performing" ironically reflects a paradox of law enforcement: selective prosecution, minimal efforts to expose higher-level actors, and lack of transparency. This structure of impunity signals institutional decay, wherein oversight functions collapse due to systemic co-optation. When oversight is institutionalized to facilitate political compromise, accountability becomes a simulation devoid of deterrent effect.

A crucial dimension in Dompu's rent-seeking ecology is the involvement of local business actors affiliated with government officials. These relations surpass individual transactions and evolve into chronic structures of crony capitalism; wherein capital accumulation occurs not through market efficiency but through power networks. Public procurement becomes a legal vehicle for transferring public resources to private actors within closed networks.

Delayed law enforcement such as the 2006 vessel procurement case executed only in 2020 demonstrates weak tracking systems and the absence of political will. The delay stems not from case complexity but from political intervention and judicial collusion. Consequently, the legal system not only fails but reinforces cycles of impunity.

Across the three regions, similar structural patterns of rent-seeking emerge, although operational expressions differ. Bima City represents a model of single-actor domination orchestrating a vertically integrated rent system. Bima Regency exhibits a kleptocratic configuration diffused within bureaucratic–legislative networks with recurring schemes. Dompu presents a convergence of rent-seeking and impunity in which all state instruments serve as protective mechanisms for rent extraction.

Rent-seeking in procurement systems has evolved into a new form of informal power embedded within formal instruments. Budget politics, project tendering, internal auditing, and external oversight are all operated through simulacra that project accountability while perpetuating predatory power. Within such a configuration, citizens

lose meaningful participatory space, and local democracy is reduced to an electoral procedure devoid of ethical substance (Munandar et al., 2023).

Cronyism and Procurement Cartels

Cronyism and procurement cartels function not merely as instruments of power exchange, but as mechanisms for articulating oligarchic domination that hijack democratic institutional systems through bureaucratic patronage and procedural co-optation. Within this configuration, procurement no longer operates as a technocratic mechanism grounded in efficiency and transparency. Instead, it has transformed into an arena of structural domination that blurs the boundaries between formal authority and informal networks.

In the case of Bima City, the corruption scheme involving Muhammad Lutfi illustrates a deeply embedded form of crony state relations. He did not act as an isolated perpetrator but rather as the architect of a pseudo procurement system operated through informal power networks involving family members, technical bureaucrats, and politically affiliated contractors. This condition reflects the logic of neo patrimonialism, in which public office and state resources are controlled by elites who behave more as political entrepreneurs than as public administrators. Lutfi orchestrated predetermined procurement outcomes prior to the formal bidding process, a practice consistent with ex ante collusion in political economy, referring to pre arranged manipulations that undermine competitive market mechanisms.

In Bima Regency, procurement cartels emerge in a more complex form through systematic state capture. The ship procurement project and the public street lighting housing project demonstrate the erosion of institutional autonomy, with state agencies repurposed to serve the interests of political cronies. In this context, relationships between political actors and contractors are no longer merely transactional but have

become institutionalized and mutualistic, forming a sustained rent seeking structure. From a rentier state perspective, public institutions do not merely fail to prevent corruption but actively generate rent economies by allocating projects designed not for public benefit but for reinforcing local oligarchic power through selective contract distribution.

Cronyism in Bima Regency further manifests as entrenched crony capitalism, where contractor selection and bid conditioning are governed by personalistic ties, revealing a structural collapse of meritocratic principles. Horticulture programs, social assistance schemes, and even micro level procurements such as metrology become channels for diffusing the interests of political cronies. This demonstrates that cronyism permeates not only large scale projects but also lower administrative levels, where social connections consistently outweigh technical competence. Such conditions indicate institutional displacement, in which technocratic functions are supplanted by political functions embedded within patron client relations.

In Dompu Regency, procurement cartels operate within an institutional environment characterized by normative collapse. Bureaucratic actors, particularly agency heads, play central roles in constructing rent networks by facilitating fictitious procurement, manipulating receipts, and falsifying accountability documents. From a theoretical standpoint, this represents an advanced form of predatory governance, in which state actors exploit public authority for extractive purposes, producing a regime of informal legality that disguises illegal practices through engineered procedural compliance.

The dominance of informal structures in Dompu's procurement practices also reflects a variant of local oligarchy that is politically inclusive yet economically exclusionary. Political elites monopolize access to public resources and determine which actors may enter rent distribution networks. In cases such as metrology equipment

procurement and community health center construction, contractors were selected not on the basis of technical qualifications but on political loyalty. This pattern aligns with Mancur Olson's conceptualization of the transformation of roving bandits into stationary bandits, whereby elites establish permanent systems of exploitation through state mechanisms.

Across the three regions, cronyism and procurement cartels signal a shift from Weberian bureaucracy toward patrimonial bureaucracy, in which the boundaries between public and private spheres collapse. The deployment of state institutions to serve elite interests resonates with O'Donnell's concept of delegative democracy, wherein democratic mandates are utilized not to strengthen public accountability but to consolidate power through loyalty based arrangements. Consequently, both internal and external oversight mechanisms frequently fail to expose corruption networks involving powerful actors, as these institutions have become integrated into the very oligarchic systems they are intended to monitor.

Baudrillard's notion of simulacra further illuminates procurement practices in these regions. Formal procedures such as open bidding, electronic procurement documentation, and audit mechanisms function largely as symbolic representations of governance that conceal pre engineered fraudulent outcomes. While administrative processes appear orderly on the surface, substantive results are predetermined through informal alliances between political and business elites. What emerges, therefore, is not bureaucratic dysfunction but a pathological function of bureaucracy repurposed as a rent extraction apparatus.

As political elites in Bima City, Bima Regency, and Dompu instrumentalize procurement mechanisms for power consolidation, public procurement becomes a means of producing political authority. Government projects no longer generate legitimacy through public benefit but through the distribution of resources to cronies and

political allies. This relationship produces not only oligarchic but also recursive power structures, in which each budget cycle reinforces pre existing rent arrangements. Even when key actors are prosecuted, similar patterns reappear through different individuals embedded within the same networks. This reflects a form of institutional isomorphism in power pathologies, whereby dysfunctional systems reproduce their logic through structural continuity.

At the macro level, the three regions exhibit a coherent pattern in which cronyism and procurement cartels constitute the backbone of local oligarchic consolidation. Weak civil society capacity and the underperformance of local media oversight create an environment with minimal effective scrutiny, enabling the persistence of structural impunity. Legal violations become strategic instruments rather than anomalies. Within a broader theoretical framework, this phenomenon exemplifies local illiberal democracy, in which electoral procedures function as rituals of legitimacy for actors who already dominate regional political economic structures through control over public procurement institutions (Maulani, 2020).

3. Conclusion

The findings indicate that the corruption practices observed are not merely individual deviations but constitute concrete manifestations of systemic decay shaped by state capture, neo patrimonialism, and crony capitalism. From a theoretical standpoint, this phenomenon reflects a convergence of Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality, theories of patrimonial democracy, and the elite circulation perspectives of Mosca and Pareto, all of which illuminate the dominance of oligarchic power within a dysfunctional configuration of local democracy. In practice, procurement processes are no longer grounded in principles of efficiency and accountability. Instead,

they are governed by informal patron client relations, with technical bureaucracies transformed into instruments for legitimizing political rent extraction.

Procurement mechanisms such as the Electronic Procurement Service and the Electronic Procurement System function merely as procedural simulacra, as dominant actors pre engineer project outcomes through interventions in planning processes, document preparation, and the distribution of illicit fees within elite networks. The inability of both internal and external oversight bodies to dismantle these networks reveals a condition of severe institutional decay, compounded by structural impunity that effectively eliminates deterrence. Furthermore, budget legislation processes have been commodified as instruments of electoral consolidation through oligarchic negotiation among political elites. In this context, corruption no longer constitutes a legal aberration but has evolved into an institutionalized infrastructure of local politics, in which the logic of predatory power erodes democratic legitimacy and systematically undermines the ethical foundations of governance.

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The Relevance of the Muhammadiyah Concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* in Reducing Divorce Trends in Indonesia: A Socio-Religious Analysis Based on Community Data

Hector Javier Cortes Tornel^{1*}, Muhammad Hayat²

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang 1; tornelhector@webmail.umm.ac.id

² Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang 2; hayat@umm.ac.id

* Correspondence: tornelhector@webmail.umm.ac.id; Tel.: -

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Abstract: The increasing divorce rate in Indonesia over the past decade reflects growing vulnerabilities in family resilience shaped by transformations in social, economic, and cultural structures. This article examines the relevance of the Muhammadiyah concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* in addressing contemporary divorce trends through a socio religious approach grounded in community data. The study employs a non field research design based on secondary data analysis, including official Muhammadiyah documents, reports on Muhammadiyah community programs, and divorce statistics published by the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Supreme Court of Indonesia. The analysis is conducted thematically using content analysis and comparative socio religious analysis techniques. The findings demonstrate that the Muhammadiyah concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* functions as a normative framework emphasizing mutuality, relational justice, deliberation (*musyawarah*), and dialogical conflict management as key foundations of family resilience. This framework is operationalized through community based family development initiatives, including premarital guidance, family counseling, and family education programs organized by Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah. However, national divorce statistics indicate that the practical effectiveness of the *Keluarga Sakinah* concept is constrained by structural factors such as economic pressure and broader social transformation. Therefore, this study concludes that the relevance of the Muhammadiyah concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* is contextual in nature and depends on sustained synergy among religious organizations, the state, and civil society in strengthening family resilience in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Keluarga Sakinah*, Muhammadiyah, divorce, family resilience, sociology of religion

1. Introduction

Divorce cases in Indonesia have increased dramatically over the past decade, emerging as a major social issue that threatens the stability of family relationships. This increase not only reflects the weakening of family resilience but also indicates significant transformations in the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of society. More specifically, this phenomenon is evidenced by economic pressures, conflicts related to gender roles, inadequate communication between spouses, and insufficient premarital preparedness, which frequently act as triggers for divorce. Numerous studies indicate that economic factors, communication disharmony, psychological stress, and shifts in cultural values contribute substantially to the high divorce rate

(Lazim, 2022). The impact of divorce is also far-reaching, affecting not only the couple involved but also children, the broader social environment, and educational institutions (Rahmawati, 2021).

In a religious society such as Indonesia, religious approaches are often positioned as an important foundation for nurturing strong families. Religious values are believed to serve as moral guidelines governing spousal relationships, child-rearing patterns, and solutions to family-related problems. The norms embedded in religious teachings function as sources of normative legitimacy that emphasize the importance of commitment, responsibility, and mutual respect within the household. Accordingly, religious institutions and the organizations under their auspices play a central role in shaping family resilience, for example through religious preaching (dakwah), premarital education, and continuous family guidance.

Religious organizations, including Muhammadiyah, have formulated family development guidelines through the concept of *keluarga sakinah*, which emphasizes harmony grounded in spirituality, justice, and healthy relationships (Gandhung Fajar Panjalu & Asrori, 2025). This concept is based on an understanding of the family as the most fundamental social unit, which serves as a reference for assessing the quality of broader societal life. Spirituality within the *keluarga sakinah* framework is positioned as a guiding source that shapes how family members behave, communicate, and make decisions. This spiritual orientation underpins principles of justice that are manifested through balanced divisions of responsibility among husbands, wives, and other family members. Moreover, healthy relationships are reinforced through two-way communication, mutual respect, and consensus-based conflict resolution in accordance with religious values. In this sense, the concept provides both normative and practical guidance on how an ideal family should be managed from a modernist Islamic perspective.

The Muhammadiyah version of *keluarga sakinah* is not understood merely as a conflict-free family, but rather as one that is capable of managing conflict wisely. In everyday life, differences of opinion and friction among family members are seen as natural and inevitable. What is emphasized, however, is not the avoidance of problems, but the ability of each family member to listen empathetically with openness and understanding. Mutual respect, restraint of ego, and constructive communication are considered key to preventing conflicts from becoming prolonged. Through these practices, the family develops into a harmonious unit and becomes a

safe, comforting space characterized by mutual appreciation. These principles align with core family values such as deliberation (*musyawarah*), gender justice, mutuality, and moral responsibility as foundational pillars of the family (Adib & Mujahidah, 2021). This perspective is also consistent with Islamic family education, which views the household as a primary space for ethical and spiritual formation (Hamidah & Mayaningsih, 2025).

The high rate of divorce indicates a gap between the ideal family values promoted in religious teachings and the complexity of contemporary social realities. Changes in social structure, increased mobility of women, economic pressures on young families, and shifts in digital communication patterns significantly affect household dynamics (Mau, 2025). In such conditions, many couples feel overwhelmed by life demands that exceed their adaptive capacities, making mutual adjustment increasingly difficult. Religious values that are expected to provide comfort and guidance become more challenging to practice in daily life. As a result, households that are ideally envisioned as safe spaces may instead transform into environments marked by pressure and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, family development efforts must adapt to modern contexts without losing the essential substance of religious values.

The use of community-based data in family research is crucial, as it provides a factual picture of how the *keluarga sakinah* concept is implemented in everyday life. Such data enable researchers to understand patterns of family strengthening, forms of social support, and conflict resolution strategies from the perspective of Muhammadiyah communities (Giffari & Hayat, 2025). This community-based approach also reinforces the interconnection between religious values and social practices.

A socio-religious perspective in family studies has become increasingly relevant because it integrates structural and spiritual analyses (Susanti, Ramadhan, Justicia, Khoirul, & Isfironi, 2019). This approach situates religiosity, morality, religious experience, and social interaction as interconnected elements in understanding household dynamics (Maulina et al., 2025). Consequently, the relevance of the *keluarga sakinah* concept must be examined through a synthesis of social factors and religious values.

As a modernist Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah possesses an extensive infrastructure for family development through institutions such as the Majelis Tarjih, the Majelis

Pendidikan Kader, and premarital education programs (Gandhung et al., 2025). These programs are considered effective in fostering emotionally and spiritually resilient families (Sholikha et al., 2025). Several studies indicate that families receiving intensive guidance tend to develop more constructive mechanisms for managing conflict (S. & Syafiuddin, 2025).

Previous studies have examined the concept of keluarga sakinah within Islamic perspectives; however, most of them remain normative-doctrinal in nature and have not directly linked the concept to contemporary divorce trends. For instance, research on keluarga sakinah resilience often focuses on theological dimensions without integrating digital dynamics, social change, or community-based data (Nadapdap & Marbun, 2025). Conversely, sociological studies on divorce rarely incorporate religious values as primary analytical variables (Amna, 2025). This situation indicates a research gap that calls for the integration of Muhammadiyah's religious values with modern social analysis.

Furthermore, there remains a limited number of studies that systematically examine the relevance of the keluarga sakinah concept based on Muhammadiyah community data. Previous research tends to emphasize theoretical discussions or individual experiences rather than broader community patterns (Alfiannor, 2024). In contrast, this study examines the relevance of the keluarga sakinah concept by integrating a socio-religious perspective, community-based data, and analysis of contemporary divorce trends.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to: (1) analyze the relevance of the Muhammadiyah concept of Keluarga Sakinah in addressing the increasing divorce trend in Indonesia; (2) identify how sakinah values are implemented in family life based on community data; and (3) map the contribution of Muhammadiyah's socio-religious approach as a model for family strengthening. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the field of Islamic family studies and practically to divorce prevention efforts through the reinforcement of family development programs within religious organizations and the wider society. In addition, this study seeks to analyze the relevance of the Muhammadiyah Keluarga Sakinah concept as a socio-religious construct in responding to divorce trends in Indonesia based on documented community data and national statistical data.

2. Discussion

This study adopts a non field research design that relies on the analysis of secondary data and community based documents. The data are examined through three main clusters: (1) official Muhammadiyah documents that articulate the normative conception of keluarga sakinah; (2) documented reports of Muhammadiyah community programs and activities; and (3) divorce statistics published by state institutions, particularly the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) and the Supreme Court of Indonesia. In addition, scholarly articles and academic publications are utilized to enrich the socio religious perspective and to strengthen the analytical arguments. The analytical framework focuses on examining the relationship between the normative and conceptual construction of Muhammadiyah's keluarga sakinah and the social reality of divorce in Indonesia. The analysis is conducted thematically using content analysis and comparative socio religious analysis techniques.

2.1 The Concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* in Official Muhammadiyah Documents

The analysis of official Muhammadiyah documents indicates that the concept of keluarga sakinah is positioned as a foundational element in the formation of a progressive Islamic society. Keluarga sakinah is not merely understood as an emotionally harmonious family, but also as a social unit grounded in faith based values, relational justice, moral responsibility, and social commitment (Panjalu, 2025).

Muhammadiyah documents emphasize that keluarga sakinah is constructed through principles of mutual deliberation (musyawarah), the fulfillment of spousal rights and obligations, the strengthening of the family's educational function, and ethical and dialogical approaches to conflict management (Rahman, Ismail, & Akbar, 2025). Accordingly, the family is viewed as a practical space for the enactment of Islamic values oriented toward the prevention of destructive conflicts, including divorce.

The family is not only conceptualized as a private sphere of emotional harmony, but also as a social unit that bears ideological, moral, and social functions (Pohan et al., 2025). In the Pedoman Hidup Islami Warga Muhammadiyah and the Himpunan Putusan Tarjih, keluarga sakinah is formulated on the basis of faith, relational justice between spouses, shared

responsibility, and an orientation toward social welfare (*kemaslahatan sosial*) (Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah, 2018). Furthermore, these documents stress that *keluarga sakinah* is built upon principles of mutual deliberation, proportional fulfillment of rights and obligations, and the reinforcement of educational functions and moral exemplarity within the family. The ideal family relationship promoted by Muhammadiyah rejects oppressive hierarchical patterns and instead emphasizes dialogical ethics, gender justice, and collective responsibility in caregiving and decision making (Khoiriyah et al., 2025). These principles are positioned as normative mechanisms for maintaining family resilience amid social change.

From a socio religious perspective, the normative construction of Muhammadiyah's *keluarga sakinah* functions as a framework for preventing destructive conflict, including divorce. However, several studies reveal a gap between this normative ideal and the lived realities of Muslim families in Indonesia, particularly due to economic pressures, shifting gender roles, and transformations in family communication patterns (Irama & Fahmi, 2025). Therefore, the concept of *keluarga sakinah* in Muhammadiyah documents must be read critically as a normative discourse that dynamically interacts with complex social realities.

2.2 Implementation of the *Keluarga Sakinah* Concept in Muhammadiyah Community Programs

An analysis of documented Muhammadiyah community program reports demonstrates systematic efforts to translate the normative concept of *keluarga sakinah* into social practice. These programs include premarital guidance, family religious study sessions, community based marital counseling, and the strengthening of 'Aisyiyah's role in family education (Cahaya, 2025).

These community programs emphasize enhancing the capacity of married couples to manage conflict, develop interpersonal communication skills, and understand gender roles grounded in justice. Although they are not explicitly framed as divorce reduction programs, the preventive approaches employed indicate a strong orientation toward strengthening family resilience in response to domestic social problems.

Furthermore, Muhammadiyah community program reports show that the transformation of the *keluarga sakinah* concept does not remain at the level of religious discourse alone, but is integrated into sustained social empowerment initiatives. Premarital guidance and family

counseling activities are designed using participatory educational approaches that involve religious leaders, organizational cadres, and community based family counselors. This pattern illustrates Muhammadiyah's role as a moral intermediary that bridges normative Islamic teachings with the practical needs of Muslim families at the grassroots level, particularly in navigating contemporary household dynamics (Humaidi, 2025).

Moreover, the strengthening of 'Aisyiyah's role in family education highlights a progressive gender dimension within Muhammadiyah's interpretation of *keluarga sakinah*. Through family education councils, parenting schools, and thematic religious study forums, 'Aisyiyah actively fosters relational awareness that positions women not merely as domestic actors, but as educational subjects and agents of family resilience (Umniyyah et al., 2025). These findings indicate that Muhammadiyah community programs implicitly adopt a cultural preventive strategy in responding to increasing vulnerabilities in household conflict, emphasizing relational literacy, ethical communication, and more equitable role sharing as the foundation of an adaptive *keluarga sakinah* amid social change.

2.3 Divorce Trends in Indonesia Based on Statistical Data

Divorce statistics sourced from the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Supreme Court indicate that divorce remains a persistent social phenomenon and has exhibited fluctuating trends in recent years (Bahri, 2025). Factors commonly associated with divorce include economic difficulties, marital disharmony, domestic violence, and weak communication and commitment between spouses.

In this context, divorce should not be understood solely as a legal issue, but also as a reflection of changes in social structures, family values, and the challenges of modern life. These statistical data provide an important social context for analyzing the relevance of Muhammadiyah's *keluarga sakinah* concept. Divorce statistics published by state institutions therefore function not only as quantitative indicators, but also as reflections of social problems that challenge the sustainability of ideal family models. This empirical context serves as a critical foundation for assessing the extent to which Muhammadiyah's *keluarga sakinah* concept

demonstrates relevance, adaptability, and transformative capacity in responding to the complex realities of contemporary Indonesian Muslim families.

Drawing on this empirical context, Muhammadiyah's *keluarga sakinah* concept should be understood not as a static normative formula, but as an ethical framework that requires continuous reinterpretation and contextual actualization in response to social change. The relevance of this concept lies in its capacity to provide value based references for strengthening family resilience through just relational management, dialogical communication, and mutual role sharing amid increasingly complex structural pressures. Therefore, the effectiveness of *keluarga sakinah* as a model for family strengthening is determined not only by the normative strength of its teachings, but also by the extent to which these values can be integrated into social practices, community programs, and public policies that are sensitive to the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian Muslim families.

Table 1. Framework of Non-Field Findings

Data Source	Analytical Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to the Divorce Issue
Official Muhammadiyah documents	Concept of <i>Keluarga Sakinah</i>	The family as the foundation of moral, spiritual, and social resilience	Provides a normative framework for preventing family conflict
Muhammadiyah community program reports	Implementation of <i>sakinah</i> values	Relationship-strengthening programs, counseling, and family education	Preventive approach to household disharmony
BPS & Supreme Court statistical data	National divorce trends	Divorce is influenced by structural and relational factors	Demonstrates the urgency of strengthening family values
Scholarly articles & academic publications	Socio-religious analysis	Religion plays a significant role in family resilience	Reinforces the conceptual relevance of <i>Keluarga Sakinah</i>

From the perspective of the sociology of religion, the findings of this study indicate that the Muhammadiyah concept of *Keluarga Sakinah* cannot be separated from the dialectical relationship between religion, the state, and the family as a social institution. *Keluarga sakinah* is not merely a religious normative ideal, but also represents a response by a religious organization

to the structural problems faced by contemporary Indonesian families, such as economic pressures, changing gender roles, and state regulations governing marriage and divorce.

The relationship between religion and the state is evident in the way the Muhammadiyah concept of *keluarga sakinah* operates in parallel with state policies on family resilience and the protection of the institution of marriage. The state is present through marriage laws and the mechanisms of religious courts, while Muhammadiyah operates in the cultural and moral domains by providing ethical frameworks, education, and family support programs (Nurazila, Faradiva, & Ramadhani, 2025). In this context, religious organizations function as social mediators that bridge religious norms and the legal realities of the state.

From a sociological perspective on the family, the rising divorce rate reflected in national statistical data indicates a tension between normative ideals of the family and actual social practices. The Muhammadiyah concept of *keluarga sakinah* seeks to address this tension by emphasizing mutuality, relational justice, and dialogical communication within the family (Supyadillah et al., 2025). These values are particularly significant in the context of transforming gender relations and increasing demands for equality within the household.

Nevertheless, this discussion also reveals the structural limitations of the *keluarga sakinah* concept when confronted with macro level factors such as poverty, economic inequality, and weak social protection systems. Under such conditions, religious teachings and programs may experience a reduction in influence if they are not supported by state policies that prioritize family strengthening. Therefore, the relevance of the Muhammadiyah concept of *keluarga sakinah* is contextual and contingent upon synergy among religious actors, the state, and civil society.

From a critical sociological standpoint, the Muhammadiyah concept of *keluarga sakinah* can be understood as a form of collective agency exercised by a religious organization in response to the crisis of the modern family. This concept not only reproduces religious values but also seeks to build social resilience through the internalization of family ethics at the community level. In this way, Muhammadiyah's role extends beyond normative religious preaching toward a strategic social function in sustaining the continuity of the family institution in Indonesia.

3. Conclusion

Theoretically, this study contributes to the enrichment of the sociology of religion and the sociology of the family by demonstrating that the Muhammadiyah concept of *keluarga sakinah* can be understood as a dynamic socio religious construct rather than merely an ahistorical normative doctrine. The integration of religious document analysis, community based data, and divorce statistics reveals that religious values operate within a dialectical relationship with social structures, state policies, and transformations in modern family culture. These findings reinforce the argument that religion functions not only as a system of individual belief, but also as a form of collective social agency that shapes patterns of family resilience through cultural and institutional mechanisms.

Moreover, this study addresses gaps in previous research that tended to separate normative religious approaches from empirical analyses of divorce. By employing a community based socio religious approach, this article offers an alternative analytical framework for understanding the tension between religious family ideals and contemporary social realities. This framework has the potential to be further developed in cross organizational religious studies or comparative analyses among religious communities in responding to the crisis of the modern family.

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