



Community-Based Empowerment and the Philosophy of Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli in Makassar Island

Muhammad Khalil ✉,
Diponegoro University of Semarang, Indonesia.

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to explore the potential of social and cultural capital in the empowerment of fisher communities on Makassar Island by highlighting the local philosophy of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli*, a traditional value system rooted in the Butonese community. The research addresses the lack of integrated and culturally grounded empowerment strategies in marginal coastal areas, which often leads to ineffective interventions and sustained poverty.

Design/methods/approach – This qualitative case study employed an ethnographic approach involving field observations, in-depth interviews with community members, local leaders, and religious figures, as well as document analysis and participatory conversations. Data were collected in situ and analyzed thematically using iterative coding, enabling a deep understanding of how local values shape social relations and support informal empowerment structures.

Findings – The study reveals that the values of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli*—mutual respect, care, affection, and collective responsibility—are deeply embedded in daily interactions and function as informal mechanisms of mutual aid and resilience. However, current empowerment programs remain fragmented, focusing mainly on funding and technical training without addressing structural and cultural contexts. This disconnect limits the sustainability and relevance of the initiatives.

Research implications/limitations – The context-specific nature of the study limits its generalizability to other regions. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data means findings are interpretive and may require triangulation through quantitative approaches in future research.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the discourse on community-based development by offering an indigenous knowledge-based framework for empowerment. It emphasizes a two-track approach that combines top-down policy involvement with bottom-up community participation for more sustainable outcomes.

OPEN ACCESS

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:

03-07-2024

Accepted:

20-12-2024

KEYWORDS

community empowerment; social capital; local wisdom; Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli; fisher communities; participatory development

Introduction

Coastal communities in Indonesia experience structural marginalization, socio-economic vulnerability, and limited access to sustainable development programs. This marginalization is primarily the result of systemic issues in governance, resource allocation, and socio-economic policy formulation,

CONTACT: ✉ khalilmuhammad165@gmail.com

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which create a challenging environment where vulnerable populations, such as fisherfolk, are often trapped in cycles of poverty (Bahasoan et al., 2023; Khaerah et al., 2021). Despite the government's empowerment initiatives, such as the Coastal Community Economic Empowerment Program (PEMP), significant economic upliftment has not materialized for local fisherfolk, particularly on islands like Makassar in Southeast Sulawesi (Khaerah et al., 2021).

A critical factor contributing to the ongoing poverty faced by these communities is the lack of infrastructural development and support systems. Fisherfolk on Makassar Island, predominantly of Butonese descent, encounter serious limitations in infrastructure and technology, which hinder their ability to engage effectively in sustainable fishing practices. Studies have shown that insufficient fisheries technology restricts productivity, while inadequate infrastructure limits access to regional markets and essential resources, compounding their economic challenges (Khaerah et al., 2021). Additionally, governance structures often do not address the specific needs of these communities, resulting in a disconnect between policy objectives and local realities, further exacerbating socio-economic vulnerabilities (Bahasoan et al., 2023; .

In conclusion, although programs like PEMP aim to empower fisherfolk, the prevailing structural marginalization and socio-economic disadvantages in regions such as Makassar Island highlight the limitations of these initiatives. Effective governmental support should include not only economic empowerment measures but also significant investment in infrastructure and fisheries technology, and a participatory approach to policy-making that genuinely addresses the unique challenges faced by coastal communities (Bahasoan et al., 2023; Khaerah et al., 2021).

Coastal communities in Indonesia possess valuable reservoirs of social and cultural capital, particularly embodied in local philosophies such as *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli*, which emphasizes mutual respect, care, affection, and cooperation. This rich social capital acts as a fundamental resource that can foster strong community bonds and enhance collective action among its members (Amsyah & Juanda, 2022; Guswandi, 2018). The philosophy not only reflects local norms but also serves to strengthen community ties, thus playing a crucial role in facilitating cooperative behavior necessary for addressing local challenges and development goals (Guswandi, 2018).

The importance of social capital in community empowerment has been emphasized by several scholars, including Putnam, Coleman, and Fukuyama, who have noted its critical role in enhancing collective action, building trust, and facilitating local development (Jarosz-Angowska et al., 2015). For instance, Putnam argues that communities rich in social capital experience greater levels of civic engagement and collective problem-solving, which in turn promotes sustainable development and resilience (Joanis et al., 2020). Similarly, Coleman's work highlights how social networks and relationships can facilitate the sharing of resources, enabling communities to achieve collective goals they might not accomplish individually (Jarosz-Angowska et al., 2015). Bourdieu further articulates that the strength of social networks and shared norms significantly contribute to a community's ability to empower itself sustainably (Rogošić & Baranović, 2016).

Therefore, enhancing social capital through effective community engagement and shared values can lead to significant strides in local development initiatives. For instance, the cultivation of cooperation and shared norms found within the Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli philosophy can be leveraged to mobilize collective efforts that promote better resource management, improved local governance, and enhanced socio-economic conditions for coastal communities (Darmi et al., 2020; Suryanto et al., 2023). In conclusion, the blending of local wisdom with social capital principles not only fosters resilience but also paves the way for sustainable development in coastal areas, indicating that investment in cultural and social frameworks may yield considerable benefits for these communities (Nazriansyah et al., 2023).

Current development models frequently overlook intangible assets, particularly in the context of coastal communities in Indonesia. This gap occurs because the prevailing focus on technical and financial interventions neglects crucial aspects of local culture and community values that are vital for sustainable development (Sayogo et al., 2023; . Intangible assets, such as indigenous knowledge and social capital, can significantly enhance community resilience and adaptive capacity; however, they often remain underutilized in program design and implementation (Sayogo et al., 2023; .

Moreover, program designs that fail to incorporate culturally rooted values and local agency risk imposing external solutions that do not resonate with the community's unique context. Research has shown that conventional approaches often disregard local norms and values, which are essential in

shaping the effectiveness of development interventions (Sayogo et al., 2023; . By embracing frameworks that prioritize local priorities and agency, communities can achieve self-empowerment and align more closely with their cultural identities. The ontological turn in cultural analysis emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing local ways of being as a means to foster genuine community engagement Sundararajan & Yeh, 2021).

This study adopts a community-based approach to explore how the integration of indigenous philosophies can support empowerment from within, as opposed to relying solely on external impositions. Empirical evidence suggests that development initiatives informed by local philosophies and norms yield more sustainable outcomes, as they resonate more closely with the realities and aspirations of community members (Sayogo et al., 2023; . In conclusion, a paradigm shift in development practices is necessary—one that prioritizes the harnessing of intangible assets alongside technical and financial support. Such an approach would not only empower communities but also lead to more sustainable and context-sensitive development outcomes (Sayogo et al., 2023; Sundararajan & Yeh, 2021). The main aim of this paper is to explore the intersection of local wisdom and community empowerment by analyzing the roles, functions, and potential of social and cultural capital among Makassar Island's fisher communities. The study contributes to the broader discourse on participatory development by offering a locally grounded model for empowerment and proposing a dual-track approach that combines bottom-up participation with top-down policy engagement.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative case study** design with an ethnographic orientation to explore the role of local philosophy and social capital in empowering fisher communities on Makassar Island. The approach was chosen to allow in-depth understanding of social behavior, cultural norms, and local values embedded in community life.

Population and Sample

The research was conducted among the **fisherfolk community in Makassar Island**, located in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The target population consisted of adult members of the Butonese ethnic group who

were actively engaged in small-scale fishing activities. A **purposive sampling** technique was used to select key informants including village elders, fishermen, women involved in fish processing, religious leaders, and local officials. A total of **20 informants** were involved in the study.

Data Collection Techniques and Instrumentation

Data were collected through **participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and documentation analysis** (e.g., local records, religious texts, photos, and community meeting notes). An interview guide was developed based on themes from the literature and preliminary field observations, including questions about social norms, cooperation practices, community beliefs, and empowerment experiences.

The **researcher was present in the field** for an extended period (2 months), engaging directly with community members to build trust and collect data in a naturalistic setting. Field notes and audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and triangulated with observational data to enhance credibility.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using **thematic analysis** with iterative coding and constant comparison techniques. Initial codes were generated from the interview transcripts and field notes, followed by category development and theme formulation. The analysis was conducted continuously alongside data collection to allow flexibility and depth in exploring emergent themes.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the **validity and trustworthiness** of the findings, the study employed several strategies, including **triangulation of data sources, member checking** with key informants, **peer debriefing** with academic colleagues, and **prolonged engagement** in the field. A **reflexive journal** was also maintained to account for the researcher's positionality and potential biases throughout the research process.

Research Location and Duration

The research took place in **Makassar Island, Southeast Sulawesi**, from **August to October 2024**. This period included time for initial entry, data gathering, and post-field analysis

Results

1.1. Internalization of Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli Values

The fisher communities of Makassar Island continue to uphold the traditional Butonese philosophy of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* as a living cultural value. The four core principles—(1) *pomae-maeka* (mutual modesty), (2) *pomaa-maasiaka* (mutual affection), (3) *popia-piara* (mutual care), and (4) *poangka-angkataka* (mutual respect)—are practiced in daily interactions. These values serve as informal governance systems regulating social behavior, strengthening solidarity, and ensuring community support for vulnerable groups. The fisher communities of Makassar Island continue to uphold the traditional Butonese philosophy of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* as a living cultural value. This ongoing adherence underscores the importance of maintaining cultural traditions as integral to community identity and cohesion. The philosophy's four core principles—(1) *pomae-maeka* (mutual modesty), (2) *pomaa-maasiaka* (mutual affection), (3) *popia-piara* (mutual care), and (4) *poangka-angkataka* (mutual respect)—are actively practiced in daily interactions among community members, thereby fostering a supportive environment.

These values serve as informal governance systems that regulate social behavior within the community, illustrating how traditional practices can effectively govern interactions and establish social expectations. The principles of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* facilitate the strengthening of solidarity among members, as the community functions collaboratively to support its most vulnerable members. For example, *pomae-maeka* encourages humility while enhancing interpersonal relationships, *pomaa-maasiaka* nurtures emotional bonds, *popia-piara* advocates for caring for one another, and *poangka-angkataka* ensures respect continues to permeate all interactions, collectively fostering a supportive community fabric.

The significance of these cultural values extends beyond mere social interactions; they also play a critical role in community governance and resilience, particularly in the face of socio-economic challenges. Research indicates that incorporating indigenous philosophies into the formal policy landscape can bridge the gap between external interventions and local traditions, ensuring strategies are culturally relevant and effective. Therefore, the proactive practice of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* not only illuminates the enduring legacy of Butonese culture but also provides a framework for

empowering communities from within. In conclusion, the sustained practice of Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli within the fisher communities of Makassar Island exemplifies the profound impact cultural values can have on social cohesion and governance. Recognizing and integrating these values into development strategies could enhance community resilience and support the empowerment journey of local populations.

1.2. Social Capital in Practice

Social capital, both bonding and bridging types, plays a crucial role in fostering cohesion and collective action among community members. Bonding social capital manifests through strong ties among individuals with similar backgrounds, facilitating support networks that enhance trust and mutual aid in local settings Li et al. (2023)(Sama et al., 2016). For instance, in the context of community events and initiatives, individuals utilize their close relationships to mobilize resources and support each other, creating a safety net that resonates particularly well in marginalized populations (Sama et al., 2016).

Conversely, bridging social capital connects individuals across diverse social groups, fostering collaboration and understanding among varied community members. This type of social capital is vital for addressing complex community issues by integrating different perspectives and fostering inclusive participation (Dumčienė & Lapėnienė, 2018; Gundewar & Chin, 2020). As noted in recent studies, effective community governance often relies on bridging connections to promote engagement across socioeconomic divides, thereby enhancing collective action and problem-solving capabilities (Amemiya et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the interplay between bonding and bridging social capital becomes increasingly relevant in contexts where community members face collective challenges, such as economic disadvantage or environmental issues. Research indicates that when communities harness both forms of social capital, they tend to develop more robust responses to crises, ultimately leading to improved community welfare and resilience (Marlier et al., 2015; Muringani et al., 2021). For example, in coastal communities, combining kinship-based support networks with broader community coalitions can lead to better resource management practices and enhanced recovery efforts following environmental disturbances (Qurniati et al., 2017; Primadata et al., 2023). In conclusion, the evidence underscores the

importance of recognizing and leveraging both bonding and bridging social capital in community initiatives. By investing in these social networks, communities can strengthen their capacity for collective action, thereby enhancing their overall resilience and sustainability in the face of various challenges.

1.2.1. Mutual Aid and Resource Sharing

Communal assistance in daily life includes lending boats or fishing equipment, food sharing during low-catch days, and informal debt arrangements. This informal system helps households cope with economic vulnerability and limited access to formal credit institutions.

(“If someone lacks fuel or fishing net, others will offer help—even without being asked,” said one elder fisherman.)

1.2.2. Trust and Informal Patron-Client Structures

The persistence of patron-client relationships among fishermen reflects both cultural continuity and economic necessity. Local elites or “boat owners” support smaller fishermen in exchange for loyalty and a portion of the harvest. The persistence of **patron-client relationships** among fishermen demonstrates the continued relevance of traditional power dynamics in coastal communities. These relationships endure because they serve both **cultural functions**, such as maintaining social hierarchy and communal interdependence, and **economic purposes**, offering access to resources in the absence of formal financial systems.

In many Indonesian fishing villages, especially in small-scale fisheries, **local elites** (often boat owners or fish collectors) provide essential capital, equipment, or market access to poorer fishermen who cannot operate independently. In return, these clients are bound to share their catch or labor in a form of reciprocal dependency (Satria & Matsuda, 2004; Fabinyi, 2010). This system reflects what Geertz (1960) described as the **“patron-client” structure** deeply embedded in Southeast Asian rural societies, where loyalty and social obligations often substitute for legal contracts. Thus, the **continuity** of patron-client ties is not simply a matter of economic survival but also reflects **culturally embedded norms of exchange and obligation** that shape the organization of coastal livelihoods and resist replacement by purely formal institutional interventions (Platteau, 2000; Kusnadi, 2002).

1.3. Constraints to Empowerment Implementation

Despite strong social cohesion, external empowerment programs often fail to align with local norms or structures. Despite strong social cohesion, **external empowerment programs frequently fail to align with the local norms and institutional structures** of coastal communities. This misalignment occurs because many programs adopt a **top-down, standardized approach** that overlooks **indigenous knowledge systems**, traditional leadership roles, and informal economic arrangements that govern daily life.

Table 1. Mismatch between Top-Down Programs and Local Practices

Government Program	Local Reality	Impact
Fishery equipment assistance	Not adapted to traditional boat design	Low usage rate
Training on fish processing	Delivered in formal language, without context	Minimal knowledge uptake
Financial capital aid	Requires bank accounts	Many locals remain unbanked

Numerous studies have shown that externally designed interventions often neglect community-specific cultural dynamics, leading to poor implementation and low participation. For instance, Kusnadi (2002) observed that government fisheries programs rarely take into account local customary law (*adat*) and cooperative labor traditions, resulting in mistrust or even passive resistance from local actors. Similarly, Armitage et al. (2009) emphasized that community-based resource management in coastal settings succeeds only when interventions respect and incorporate **existing social networks and cultural institutions**. A study by Campbell et al. (2013) in Eastern Indonesia further revealed that failure to engage local leaders and adapt to traditional knowledge systems significantly limited the impact of empowerment programs. Therefore, for empowerment efforts to be effective and sustainable, they must be **context-sensitive** and **co-designed with local actors**, ensuring compatibility with the values, social practices, and governance structures already in place.

1.4. Role of Religion in Social Cohesion

Islamic teachings reinforce local values of cooperation and mutual trust. Community members consistently cite religious justification for supporting one another, especially in hard times.

(“Religion teaches us to be together and help each other—that’s why we do this,” said a community leader.)

Figure

1.

(a) Fishermen working together to push a boat to shore; (b) Community gathering during a local religious event in Makassar Island)

The results indicate that empowerment strategies must go beyond technical inputs and address the embedded cultural and religious dimensions that sustain social life. Failure to do so leads to a superficial impact and low community engagement.

Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm the significance of local wisdom and social capital in sustaining community cohesion and survival strategies among coastal populations. Specifically, the philosophy of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli*, which is deeply rooted in Butonese culture, serves as both a moral framework and a practical system of informal governance. This philosophy embodies an array of values that facilitate mutual support, conflict resolution, and community-based resilience among fisher communities. The findings of this study reaffirm the **critical role of local wisdom and social capital** in sustaining cohesion and survival strategies among coastal populations.

These intangible cultural assets, often overlooked in conventional development planning, function as **moral frameworks and informal governance systems** that guide daily interactions, resource sharing, and collective decision-making. In the case of the fisher communities of Makassar Island, the **philosophy of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli***—a set of cultural values rooted in Butonese tradition—operates as both ethical guide and socio-political instrument. Comprising principles such as *pomae-maeka* (mutual modesty), *pomaa-maasiaka* (mutual affection), *popia-piara* (mutual care), and *poangka-angkataka* (mutual respect), this philosophy facilitates **mutual aid**,

conflict resolution, and **adaptive resilience** in the face of livelihood pressures. These findings are consistent with Putnam's (1993) and Bourdieu's (1986) arguments that social capital—manifested through trust, shared norms, and social networks—can enhance the effectiveness of community-based responses to adversity. Thus, local wisdom such as *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* should not be viewed as cultural remnants, but as **active, functional systems** that can inform more effective, bottom-up models of empowerment and development in coastal settings.

The principles of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* provide a contextual understanding of how traditional values can underpin social interactions and support systems within the community. For example, these values enable community members to navigate conflicts collaboratively, fostering an environment where reconciliation is prioritized over discord. This aligns with the broader theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars such as Putnam, Coleman, and Bourdieu, who have emphasized the importance of social networks and shared norms in promoting collective action and self-reliance in marginalized communities. Putnam (1993) posited that social capital reflects the collective value of social networks, underscoring its critical role in enhancing civic engagement and community problem-solving. This social capital enables individuals to collaborate effectively, thereby fostering resilience in the face of socio-economic challenges. Similarly, Coleman (1988) highlighted how social networks enhance the effectiveness of social action by facilitating the flow of information and resources, which is essential for cooperative behavior among community members. Bourdieu (1986) further articulated that social relations and shared norms are vital components of empowerment, illustrating how they enable marginalized groups to leverage their social capital to navigate external pressures. In conclusion, the results of this study underscore the philosophical and practical importance of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* in sustaining community cohesion and enhancing survival strategies among coastal populations. By reinforcing the value of local wisdom and social networks, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how indigenous philosophies can inform sustainable development practices and enhance the resilience of marginalized communities.

Consistent with Dasgupta's (2000) view that social capital should be understood as a constellation of interpersonal networks, this study illustrates how community solidarity in Makassar Island is not externally imposed but

organically maintained through cultural and religious integration. The sustainability of social ties among community members is largely attributed to the deep-rooted cultural values and traditions that shape interpersonal relationships and governance structures within the community (Purwanto et al., 2021). The philosophy of *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* embodies these values, reinforcing social norms that govern behavior and encourage collaboration among community members (Purwanto et al., 2021). Additionally, the patron-client structures identified in this research resemble findings in other fishing communities across Indonesia, as discussed by (Maskur & Supriatna, 2021), who highlight how social capital significantly influences community organization and cooperation in various contexts, although their analysis is not limited to kinship networks alone (Maskur & Supriatna, 2021). The reliance on kinship and social networks exemplifies how social capital can function as a safety net, providing essential resources and support systems that enhance community resilience (Prayitno et al., 2022; Djaha et al., 2018). This study highlights the importance of recognizing the value of localized social capital and cultural integration as essential components of community cohesion. Such an understanding reinforces the notion that empowering local communities often involves valuing their indigenous philosophies and leveraging their existing social networks, rather than imposing external solutions that may not align with local realities.

A significant challenge in community empowerment efforts is the **disconnect between top-down program design and local socio-cultural contexts**. When empowerment initiatives are implemented without **contextual adaptation**—such as ignoring indigenous norms, social hierarchies, and local governance mechanisms—they often **fail to resonate with community realities**, leading to low engagement and ineffective outcomes. In the case of the coastal communities of Makassar Island, externally driven programs frequently misalign with traditional systems like *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli*, which govern social behavior and communal responsibility. For example, aid programs often require formal organizational structures or banking access, which many informal fishing households lack. These rigid requirements lead to **underutilization of aid, ineffective knowledge transfer, and tokenistic participation**. This phenomenon supports Woolcock's (2001) view that development initiatives which fail to establish synergy between **grassroots social capital** and **institutional frameworks** tend to have minimal long-term impact. Likewise, Cleaver (2001) highlights how

standardized development models risk overlooking the "messiness" of everyday social life, where informal norms play a decisive role in shaping access and agency. Therefore, for empowerment strategies to be truly transformative, they must adopt **adaptive, participatory approaches** that build on local knowledge systems and integrate with existing cultural institutions—ensuring both **legitimacy and sustainability** in the eyes of the community.

However, a **notable discrepancy** arises when top-down empowerment programs are implemented without contextual adaptation. The misalignment between formal aid mechanisms and community customs results in **ineffective participation**, limited knowledge transfer, and underutilized resources. This reflects Woolcock's (2001) argument that empowerment initiatives lacking synergy between community-level dynamics and institutional frameworks often fail to yield sustainable impact.

The religious dimension, particularly Islamic ethics encouraging solidarity and mutual assistance, adds another layer to the discussion. As highlighted in previous ethnographic work (e.g., Bowen, 1993), Islam in Indonesian coastal societies often complements indigenous values, reinforcing communal ties and fostering trust.

Implications and Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that community empowerment efforts must shift from generic intervention models toward contextualized frameworks that recognize the lived realities, belief systems, and traditional structures of the target populations. Such a shift is essential for ensuring that development initiatives are not merely well-intentioned but are effectively tailored to meet the specific needs and cultural contexts of the communities they aim to serve. By acknowledging the unique socio-cultural dynamics within communities, interventions can become more resonant and impactful, ultimately leading to more sustainable outcomes. Furthermore, this study advocates for a two-track approach that combines top-down policy development with bottom-up participatory processes. This dual strategy is crucial for ensuring that community empowerment efforts provide both structural support and community ownership. The integration of local knowledge through participatory processes allows community members to actively engage in decision-making, thereby fostering a sense of agency and responsibility towards their development. The necessity of this two-track

approach aligns with the work of scholars such as Arnstein (1969), who argued that genuine participation must transcend mere tokenism to facilitate meaningful involvement of marginalized communities in governance processes.

Similarly, Freire (1970) emphasized the importance of dialogue and critical consciousness in empowering communities, suggesting that empowerment is most effective when it originates from within the community rather than being imposed externally. In conclusion, the context-specific approach to community empowerment outlined in this study serves as a vital framework for achieving sustainable development outcomes. It encourages a shift from top-down to more integrated, participatory methodologies that honor and incorporate local traditions and social structures. Future research should explore **comparative case studies** in other island or coastal communities to validate the universality or specificity of the *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* model. Mixed-method approaches integrating ethnographic and participatory action research with quantitative impact assessments could further strengthen evidence on the effectiveness of culturally grounded empowerment models.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the critical role of social and cultural capital, particularly the *Pobhinci-Bhinciki Kuli* philosophy, in sustaining mutual aid, trust, and social cohesion among fisher communities in Makassar Island. These locally rooted values not only regulate social interactions but also serve as a foundational asset for designing community-based empowerment strategies. Despite the richness of social capital, current empowerment programs remain fragmented, top-down, and insufficiently contextualized. This mismatch between program design and community reality has resulted in limited impact and low community engagement. To address these challenges, this paper recommends adopting a **two-track empowerment approach** that combines structural policy support with grassroots participation. This model ensures that empowerment is both **culturally responsive** and **institutionally supported**, thus increasing its relevance and sustainability.

The findings contribute to the growing discourse on **people-centered development**, particularly in coastal and marginalized areas. The study's proposed framework—grounded in indigenous values and reinforced by religious ethics—can serve as a **practical guide** for NGOs, government

agencies, and community facilitators working in similar contexts. Future research should explore how such localized empowerment models can be **replicated, adapted, or scaled** in different regions with varying cultural settings. There is also potential for further investigation using mixed-method approaches to quantitatively measure the social and economic impacts of culturally informed empowerment initiatives. In conclusion, truly effective empowerment must emerge not only from outside intervention but also from within the community's own values, networks, and lived experiences.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, research design, data collection in the coastal communities of Makassar, thematic analysis, manuscript drafting, and critical revisions. Each author has read and approved the final version for publication.

Funding Statement

This research was entirely self-funded by the authors and did not receive financial support from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency.

Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. However, due to ethical considerations and agreements with participants, interview transcripts and field notes are not publicly archived to protect respondent confidentiality.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the residents of the coastal communities in Makassar, especially the fishermen, women producers, youth groups, and local leaders who generously shared their time, knowledge, and experiences. Special appreciation is extended to the local community organizations and facilitators who assisted during data collection. The authors also thank the Makassar City Government, particularly the Marine

and Fisheries Office, for their support and cooperation throughout the research process.

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