

Empowerment Programs and Social Construction of Poverty in the Lauje Indigenous Community, Parigi Moutong, Central Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of poverty and the implementation of empowerment programs in the Lauje Indigenous Community in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi, with a particular focus on the social constructions that shape these programs. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and document analysis. A total of 16 informants were purposively selected, including traditional leaders, women leaders, youth leaders, indigenous community members, government program field assistants, and village heads within the Lauje Indigenous Community. The findings reveal that poverty among the Lauje Indigenous Community is a multidimensional issue influenced by both structural and cultural factors. Structural factors include limited access to transportation, healthcare, education, and low market value for agricultural products. Cultural factors relate to local beliefs, such as having many children as a sign of good fortune and traditional parenting practices that restrict women's roles in the household economy. Although the government has introduced empowerment programs under the Village SDGs framework, challenges persist due to limited infrastructure and low community participation. Existing empowerment initiatives have yet to significantly improve economic welfare, as they do not fully consider the socio-cultural conditions of indigenous communities. Meanwhile, the social construction of the Lauje Indigenous Community remains deeply rooted in values of mutual cooperation, solidarity, and harmony with nature. This social capital plays a crucial role in sustaining community life, yet it is gradually eroding due to modernization and materialism among younger generations. This study recommends that empowerment programs should be designed with greater sensitivity to local wisdom and actively involve indigenous communities in planning and execution. Furthermore, strengthening basic infrastructure, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship education is essential to enhancing the economic independence of the Lauje Indigenous Community. Lastly, efforts should be made to preserve social capital and traditional values, as they continue to serve as fundamental pillars of the community's social and economic sustainability.

Keywords: Lauje Indigenous Community, Poverty, Empowerment, Social Capital, Social Construction

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena kemiskinan dan implementasi program pemberdayaan dalam Masyarakat Adat Lauje di Kabupaten Parigi Moutong, Sulawesi Tengah, dengan fokus pada konstruksi sosial yang membentuk program-program tersebut. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), dan studi dokumen. Sebanyak 16 informan dipilih secara purposif, termasuk tokoh adat, tokoh perempuan, tokoh pemuda, anggota masyarakat adat Lauje, pendamping lapangan program pemerintah, dan kepala desa di wilayah komunitas adat tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemiskinan dalam Masyarakat Adat Lauje merupakan fenomena multidimensional yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor struktural dan budaya. Faktor struktural mencakup terbatasnya akses terhadap transportasi, layanan kesehatan, pendidikan, serta rendahnya nilai jual hasil pertanian. Faktor budaya berkaitan dengan kepercayaan lokal, seperti pandangan bahwa memiliki banyak anak adalah tanda keberuntungan serta pola pengasuhan tradisional yang membatasi peran perempuan dalam ekonomi rumah tangga. Meskipun pemerintah telah menerapkan program pemberdayaan melalui skema SDGs Desa, berbagai tantangan masih muncul, terutama dalam keterbatasan infrastruktur dan rendahnya partisipasi masyarakat. Program pemberdayaan yang ada belum secara signifikan meningkatkan kesejahteraan ekonomi masyarakat adat, karena belum sepenuhnya memperhitungkan kondisi sosial-budaya setempat. Sementara itu, konstruksi sosial dalam Masyarakat Adat Lauje masih sangat dipengaruhi oleh nilai-nilai gotong royong, solidaritas,

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dan keselarasan dengan alam. Modal sosial ini memiliki peran penting dalam keberlanjutan kehidupan komunitas, namun mulai tergerus akibat modernisasi dan materialisme di kalangan generasi muda. Studi ini merekomendasikan agar program pemberdayaan lebih sensitif terhadap kearifan lokal dan melibatkan masyarakat adat secara aktif dalam perencanaan serta implementasi. Selain itu, penguatan infrastruktur dasar, literasi keuangan, dan pendidikan kewirausahaan menjadi kunci dalam meningkatkan kemandirian ekonomi Masyarakat Adat Lauje. Terakhir, upaya pelestarian modal sosial dan nilai-nilai tradisional harus terus dilakukan, karena masih menjadi fondasi penting bagi keberlanjutan sosial dan ekonomi komunitas ini.

Kata Kunci: Masyarakat Adat Lauje, Kemiskinan, Pemberdayaan, Modal Sosial, Konstruksi Sosial

INTRODUCTION

The poor population in Indonesia is still high, recorded at 25.9 million people (9.367%). Among these poverty is the phenomenon of extreme poverty, namely residents who are not able to meet their daily basic needs, such as basic food, access to education, sanitation, clean water, and other basic needs. To reduce the burden on the poor, the government provides social assistance, such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Basic Food Social Assistance (BPS, 2023). The population of Central Sulawesi Province, which is classified as an extreme poor population, reaches 45,760 people. Meanwhile, Parigi Moutong Regency is the area with the highest number of extreme poor people in this province, namely 12,470 (BPS Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, 2024). In terms of population category, the community group with the highest extreme poverty is in indigenous communities. Poverty in indigenous communities often stems from the level of education, low health status, limited employment opportunities, and underdevelopment conditions (Sidiq, 2020).

Social construction, as explained by Berger and Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality*, argues that social reality is shaped by human interaction through the process of socialization, internalization, and institutionalization. Social constructs create meanings and norms that direct the behavior of individuals and groups in society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In the context of the Lauje Indigenous Community in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi Province, social construction plays an important role in shaping their views on poverty, education, health, and access to basic services. A history of marginalization and discrimination has shaped the social identity of these communities as marginalized groups, influencing the way they interact with government programs. In addition, geographical factors also affect the reality of poverty experienced by the Lauje indigenous people. The remote and inaccessible areas where they live make it difficult for them to gain access to markets, infrastructure, and basic services. This limits the economic and development opportunities they can achieve. In fact, economic improvement plays an important role in reducing poverty (Fatmasari et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, modernization brought about major changes in the social, economic, and cultural structure of society. The impacts of modernization, such as increasing individualism and shifting traditional values, often conflict with the collective values held by indigenous communities. Modernization can also widen the social gap between communities that are integrated with modern currents and those that maintain traditional ways of life (Amanda et al., 2025; Dewi & Wikrama, 2023). The Lauje Indigenous community faces a dilemma between preserving their cultural heritage and adapting to the changes brought about by modernization. These changes affect their participation in empowerment programs designed with a modern approach.

The social construction of the Lauje Indigenous Community significantly influences the reception and implementation of empowerment programs. Several factors, including program acceptance, community values, and communication dynamics, determine the success or failure of these initiatives.

First, perception and acceptance of the program play a crucial role. If an empowerment program does not align with the values, traditions, and needs of the community, there is a high likelihood of rejection or limited participation. Second, social integration is essential for program effectiveness. Empowerment initiatives that consider existing social norms and cultural values tend to foster greater community involvement and support, making implementation more successful. Third, coordination and communication are key to bridging the gap between the government and the community. A deeper understanding of social constructs allows for the design of more effective communication strategies, ensuring that program objectives, benefits, and expectations are clearly understood and embraced by the community.

The problem of poverty experienced by the Lauje indigenous people in Parigi Moutong Regency requires a comprehensive and sensitive approach to the local cultural context. To strengthen the implementation of empowerment programs, governments need to improve effective communication, strengthen resource capacity, plan in line with the needs of indigenous communities, and build better coordination with all stakeholders from civil society. As is known, a strong state, inseparable from the existence of a strong civil society, is needed to control the dominance of power controlled by the rulers (Nursamsir et al., 2022)

The Provincial Government of Central Sulawesi and Parigi Moutong Regency have made efforts to improve the welfare of indigenous communities through empowerment programs. Referring to the Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs Number 12 of 2015 concerning the Implementation of Presidential Regulation Number 186 of 2014 concerning Social Empowerment of KAT, the government seeks to empower KAT through the fulfillment of basic needs, social integration, and the development of independence. However, there are several obstacles faced in efforts to empower indigenous communities in Parigi Moutong Regency, namely accessibility in remote areas, which hinders the equitable distribution of aid. Therefore, long-term success depends on improved infrastructure access, improved cross-sector coordination, and better provision of basic services (Astuti, 2024)

Inter-regional collaboration through the Coordination Meeting for the Strengthening of the Poverty Alleviation Coordination Team (TKPK) at the provincial level is a strategic step to formulate a more comprehensive and integrated poverty alleviation strategy and program. Understanding the social constructs that shape the reality of poverty of the Lauje indigenous people is important in designing comprehensive and sustainable empowerment interventions. Only by taking into account the complexity of the factors involved can empowerment efforts be designed effectively and have a sustainable positive impact on the indigenous people of Lauje.

Although there has been research on the implementation of empowerment programs in remote indigenous communities in Indonesia, there has been no research that specifically reviews the implementation of the program in relation to the Lauje Indigenous Community area in Parigi Moutong Regency. Therefore, this study aims to fill the research gap, namely to unravel the phenomenon of poverty in the Lauje Indigenous Community, describe the implementation of the empowerment program in the Lauje Indigenous Community, and analyze the social construction in the empowerment program in the Lauje Indigenous Community in Parigi Moutong Regency. The success of the implementation of the empowerment program depends largely on the extent to which it can adapt to the social construction of the Lauje Indigenous Community.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research used is qualitative, namely research that uses a natural setting, with the intention of interpreting the phenomena that occur (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative research approach used is a case study, where researchers blend with the local community to understand deeply what they are experiencing related to research problems (Bungin, 2013). The research location is located in the Lauje Indigenous Community in Palasa District, Tinombo District, and Tomini District, Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. This research was carried out in January-December 2024. The selection of the study locus is based on 2 considerations: (1) the area has historically been a distribution of indigenous communities inhabiting valleys, forests and forest edges, amid the challenges of shifting cultural values due to modernization and globalization. (2) The number of Lauje Indigenous Communities in this area is the largest in Parigi Moutong Regency, but economic pressure and limited access to natural resources are potential problems that trigger internal and external conflicts, as well as encourage shifts in people's livelihood patterns and lifestyles.

Primary data in this study were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants, *focus group discussions* (FGD) and participatory observation at the research site. Informants are individuals involved in the community empowerment process in the Lauje Indigenous Community, namely traditional leaders, women leaders, youth leaders, residents of the Lauje Indigenous Community, and local governments. Informants are selected on a *purposive* basis, based on considerations of their age, experience, knowledge, interests, and social status or influence within the Lauje Indigenous Community. This aims to obtain comprehensive and representative information from various perspectives in the indigenous people. Based on this criterion, 16 informants were determined, namely: (1) 3 traditional leaders; (2) 2 female figures; (3) 2 youth leaders; (4) residents of the Lauje indigenous community 5 people; (5) 1 government program field assistant, and (6) 3 village heads. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from the study of documents related to the report describing the location and history of the Lauje Indigenous Community, as well as related scientific articles. The collected data is then analyzed through data condensation, data presentation and *conclusion drawing/verification* (Miles et al., 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Poverty in Lauje Indigenous Community, Parigi Moutong Regency

The Lauje tribe is an ethnic group that lives in the Central Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. This community lives in several districts, namely in Donggala, Tolitoli, Poso, Banggai, and Parigi Moutong Regencies. The Lauje tribe uses the Tomini language in the Lauje dialect, which is part of the Tomini-Totoli language family. Their language belongs to the Austronesian language family, the Malay-Polynesian language group.

Parigi Moutong Regency is 1 of 13 districts/cities in Central Sulawesi. This district has an area of 6,231.85 km² and is bordered by Buol, Tolitoli, and Gorontalo Provinces (north), Tomini Bay (east), Poso Regency and Sigi Regency (south), as well as Donggala Regency and Palu City (west). Parigi Moutong Regency has 23 sub-districts with 278 villages and 5 sub-districts, 1,280 hamlets, 58 RWs, and 1,468 RTs. The topography of the district is at an altitude of 0–2,900 meters above sea level and the coastline is 472 km long in Tomini Bay.

The population in 2024 will reach 457,031 people, consisting of 233,529 males and 223,502 females. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency of Parigi Moutong Regency (2020), the region's

Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 reached Rp 12.5 trillion, with an economic growth rate of 5.2%. The backbone of the economy is agriculture (35%), plantations, fisheries, and tourism. Meanwhile, the percentage of the poor population reached 15.82%, higher than the average in Central Sulawesi of 11.62% (BPS Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, 2021) Meanwhile, based on data from the local Social Service, there are 1,250 families from the Lauje Indigenous Community who are classified as poor.

The condition of education is one of the factors that affect the poverty level in the area. Based on data from the Parigi Moutong Regency Education Office in 2021, the participation rate of elementary schools (SD) reached 96.78%, junior high schools (SMP) 82.45%, and high schools (SMA) only 65.32%. The Parigi Moutong Social Service stated that there were 450 children from the Lauje Indigenous Community who dropped out of school at the junior high and high school levels. Meanwhile, in terms of health, based on data from the local Health Office in 2020, there were 320 cases of malnutrition in children from the Lauje Indigenous Community. Referring to data from the local Community and Village Empowerment Office, there are 3 areas with a high Lauje population, namely Tinombo, Palasa, and Tomini Districts. The population of Lauje in Palasa District is estimated to reach 5,800 people or 26% of the total population, while the Lauje Indigenous Community in Tomini is around 3,500 people. These communities generally live inland and coastal, with settlement patterns that still retain the cultural values and traditions of their ancestors, utilizing local resources.

Extreme poverty is a condition in which a person is unable to meet basic needs such as food, clean water, sanitation, health, shelter, education, and access to income and social services. The measure of extreme poverty, as defined by the World Bank, is spending below US\$1.9 per day. In Indonesia, extreme poverty is measured by daily expenses of Rp 10,739 or Rp 322,170 per month, in contrast to ordinary poverty which has a daily expenditure of Rp 15,750 or Rp 472,525 per month. According to data from the Social Service in 2023, the poverty rate in Parigi Moutong Regency is 21.31 percent of 3,900 poor households in Central Sulawesi, with the highest extreme poverty in Palasa, Tinombo, and Tomini Districts. The region's high geography and limited access to transportation, especially roads, are factors that exacerbate poverty conditions in the area.

Table 1. Number of Poor People by District in Parigi Moutong Regency

No	District	Poor Population (Soul)	Extreme Poor (Soul)
1	Sausu	11.811	1.942
2	Balinggi	6.309	458
3	Bolano	11.698	720
4	Bolano Lambunu	13.483	2.962
5	Ampibabo	14.423	3.144
6	Kasimbar	17.040	4.591
7	Mepanga	18.847	4.079
8	Moutong	15.516	2.209
9	Ongka Malino	15.424	3.382
10	Palasa	19.797	14.643
11	Parigi	11.634	1.178
12	Parigi Barat	6.179	825
13	Parigi Selatan	10.363	2.682
14	Parigi Tengah	6.360	1.026
15	Parigi Utara	4.148	491
16	Sidoan	10.661	4.530
17	Siniu	7.928	1.655
18	Taopa	9.352	2.592
19	Tinombo	16.808	11.545

20	Tinombo Selatan	19.129	7.024
21	Tomini	16.450	7.275
22	Toribulu	10.458	4.811
23	Torue	8.577	672
Total		282.395	84.436

Source: Social Service, Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs No. 215/HUK/2023 dated December 22, 2023 and the Coordinating Ministry for PMK, P3KE Data for 2023

The existence of residents who are classified as extreme poverty shows the inability of the central and regional governments to meet the basic needs of the community. To eliminate extreme poverty in Indonesia by 2024, the government through Presidential Instruction Number 4 of 2022 launched the Extreme Poverty Elimination Acceleration Program (PPKE) which focuses on reducing the burden of spending, increasing income, and reducing pockets of poverty. The implementation of this program uses Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) as the main data source. Research shows that several villages in Palasa, Tinomobo, and Tomini districts have high levels of extreme poverty. For example, Pebounang Village in Palasa District has 680 extreme poor families, while West Lombok Village in Tinomobo District has 338 extreme poor families. In Tomini District, West Ogotumbu Village has 220 extreme poor families. Extreme poverty is the responsibility of the government at every level, including villages, by adopting a sustainable development model based on local wisdom and religiosity through the Village Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which have 18 main goals. The achievements of the Village SDGs at the research location are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Achievement of Village SDGs at the Research Site

No	Village SDGs	Village		
		Ogotumbu Barat	Pebounang	Lombok Barat
1	Poverty-Free Village	35,81	9,45	30,79
2	Hunger-Free Village	33,33	49,93	50
3	Healthy and Prosperous	74,44	47,8	77,82
4	Quality Village Education	44,17	4,05	30,36
5	Village Women's Involvement	61,36	38,38	42,11
6	Clean Water and Sanitation Decent Village	46,24	24,35	26,47
7	Clean and Renewable Energy Village	88,94	83,22	90,2
8	Equitable Village Economic Growth	35,69	18,09	26,04
9	Village Infrastructure and Innovation as needed	4,76	0	0
10	Village Without Gaps	31,35	10,95	45,37
11	Safe and Comfortable Village Residential Area	21,2	47,09	30,35
12	Consumption and Production of Environmentally Conscious Villages	0	0	0
13	Climate Change Response	0	0	0
14	Caring for the Marine Environment	50	50	0
15	Caring for the Land Environment	50	0	0
16	Peace with Justice	78,13	57,48	84,13
17	Partnership for Village Development	60,55	40,44	0
18	Dynamic Village Institutions and Adaptive Village Culture	40,21	66,67	26,98
	Average SDG Value	42,01	30,44	31,15

Source: Data processed, 2024

Referring to the data above, West Ogotumbu Village is more progressive in involving women in development than Pebounang Village, although both are still below the ideal target. In terms of clean water and sanitation, Ogotumbu showed better conditions, while West Lombok experienced difficulties in

accessing clean water. The three villages are close to achieving the target of using clean energy, but are still far from equitable economic growth, with Pebounang lagging behind. Infrastructure and innovation are still lacking in all three villages, and social disparities remain a major problem. Pebounang Village shows a safer and more comfortable environment, but environmental awareness and efforts to achieve environmental targets are still very lacking in all villages. In maintaining peace and justice, West Lombok and Ogotumbu Villages are approaching the ideal target. Pebounang Village has stronger institutions and an adaptive culture, but overall, all three villages are still far from the ideal target of the SDGs, with Ogotumbu showing better performance in general. Many aspects such as poverty, inequality, education, and infrastructure still need to be improved.

Structural Factors of Poverty in the Lauje Indigenous Community

Structural factors of poverty faced by the Lauje Indigenous Community include discrimination, lack of infrastructure, low selling value of products, and limited access to information.

Discrimination

Indigenous communities often experience discrimination in access to health services and education. Limited access to educational facilities and low awareness of the importance of education also exacerbate poverty, with few children from communities able to complete primary education. In addition, the negative stigma against indigenous communities causes them to often be treated disrespectfully, both in health services and in social life.

Infrastructure (Road Access)

The limited road infrastructure hinders the Lauje people's access to markets, natural resources, and other important facilities. High transportation costs and long travel times further worsen their economy. Efforts to improve roads and develop better infrastructure are expected to increase people's mobility and income.

Low Selling Value

Indigenous communities face challenges in getting a decent price for their produce, due to the lack of access to a wider market and the presence of middlemen who dominate the marketing system. The low selling value of agricultural and handicraft products causes them not to earn enough income to meet basic needs.

Limited Access to Information

Limited access to market information, technology, and development opportunities makes it difficult for the people of Lauje to develop productive businesses and take advantage of existing opportunities. The lack of adequate information makes their agricultural products sold at very low prices in the local market.

Cultural Factors of Poverty in the Lauje Indigenous Community

Structural factors of poverty faced by the Lauje Indigenous Community include family social capital, limited knowledge and education, and social capital that is slowly fading.

Many Children Have a Lot of Sustenance

The Lauje community considers the family to be the main source of social capital. The family is not only a place to form social values such as honesty, cooperation, and trust, but also as a foundation for building solidarity in the community. Children are considered a future investment, which will help the family's economy later in life, especially in a society that depends on natural resources. The social capital that grows in the family is then expanded in society through socialization, creating strong and deep social bonds. The belief that having many children is a blessing reflects their view of children as a valuable social asset. In the Lauje community, social capital leads to collective cooperation and solidarity strengthened by customary values and social norms.

Limited Knowledge and Education

Limited knowledge and education among the Lauje Community led to economic problems, especially through the habit of going into debt and selling land to meet short-term social needs. The lack of financial literacy makes them more likely to seek instant solutions such as debt, which worsens long-term financial conditions. In addition, the orientation of people's livelihoods shifting to cities causes them to ignore long-term needs, such as preserving heritage land. This risks reducing their natural resources and increasing dependence on debt. Limited education and knowledge regarding financial management leads to unsustainable pragmatic behavior and risks worsening their socio-economic conditions in the future.

Fading Social Capital

The Lauje community shows that social capital plays an important role in the economic resilience of their households, especially through the value of mutual cooperation and strong solidarity. Traditional childcare patterns and strict gender roles still limit women's participation in increasing family income. Households connected to religious institutions or extended families tend to have better economic performance. Despite challenges such as the depletion of honesty due to materialistic influences, customary norms and social sanctions still maintain the integrity of the community. Social capital in the Lauje Community has proven to be an asset that strengthens solidarity and is able to neutralize the impact of unfavorable socio-economic conditions. In this context, social relations are not only based on ethnicity but also include opportunistic economic interactions. Although some individuals act on their rational choices, many continue to build trust and social obligations. Overall, social capital in the Lauje Community becomes a collective resource that helps to overcome various social and economic challenges, despite being faced with outside influences that can undermine their traditional values. Research on the role of social capital in the socio-economic resilience of tile craftsmen's families in Banjardowo shows that social capital, such as trust and social networks, plays a crucial role in production and marketing processes, as well as in helping families face economic challenges (Rahmawati et al., 2021). Additionally, women's participation in economic activities, such as trading, has been proven to help increase family income and meet household needs (Agesta, 2023).

The Meaning of Poverty According to the Lauje People

The Lauje Indigenous Community perceives poverty as encompassing not only economic factors but also social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. For them, poverty threatens community survival by

potentially inducing unwelcome social and cultural transformations. Consequently, effective poverty alleviation strategies must integrate local values, cultural considerations, and active community participation in program planning. The challenges faced by the Lauje include limited access to education, healthcare, and natural resources. Additionally, factors such as age and heredity influence poverty levels within the community. Poverty is also perceived as a loss of local wisdom in natural resource management and harmonious social relations. The Lauje's concept of wealth extends beyond material possessions to include cultural richness and a balanced relationship with nature. Meeting basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter presents challenges, as traditional reliance on natural products and consumption patterns are disrupted by lifestyle changes. Accessing necessities, particularly clothing, is difficult, with purchases typically occurring infrequently. This multidimensional understanding of poverty aligns with perspectives from other Indigenous communities. For instance, a study on Indigenous peoples' perspectives on poverty and development highlights that Indigenous communities often define poverty beyond economic terms, encompassing aspects such as social exclusion and the erosion of cultural values (Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on Poverty and Development, 2020). Similarly, research on the well-being of Indigenous people in Peninsular Malaysia reveals that insufficient access to basic education and lack of employment opportunities contribute to persistent poverty, underscoring the importance of addressing both economic and social dimensions in poverty alleviation efforts (Ali et al., 2022).

In the health sector, even though there are Puskesmas facilities, traditional medicine is still the main choice, especially for minor diseases. Stunting is a major health issue, with a higher prevalence than the national average, and there are efforts by village governments to prevent child marriage that can have an impact on reproductive health. In the field of education, despite positive changes with the presence of schools, access and motivation to continue education to a higher level are still limited. Some children choose to work in the garden because of the distance and high costs. In addition, an education system that does not fit the local culture makes children feel isolated, which also affects their participation in formal education. Overall, poverty in the Lauje Indigenous Community is a multidimensional issue that requires a holistic approach, combining economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects, as well as involving the community in every stage of planning and implementing solutions.

Empowerment Program for Lauje Indigenous Communities

The community empowerment program in the Lauje Indigenous Community has encountered various challenges and opportunities. Although several initiatives have been implemented by the government and non-governmental organizations, such as tree seedling assistance from the Forestry Service and the development of ant sugar businesses, their execution often faces obstacles due to differences in understanding between the government and the community, lack of information transparency, and limited assistance and counseling. Active community involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs is a key factor in the success of empowerment initiatives. Research indicates that prioritizing the involvement, collaboration, and empowerment of Indigenous communities and leadership is critical to successful transformation of healthcare in Indigenous communities (Smith et al., 2019). Additionally, adapting programs to local wisdom and the specific needs of the Lauje community is essential to ensure sustainability. Studies have shown that integrating local wisdom into various domains, including urban development, sustainable tourism, and community empowerment, supports ecological sustainability and encourages a sense of ownership and responsibility towards cultural heritage (Jones & Brown, 2024). The sustainability of empowerment programs is highly

dependent on community participation, fair management by the village government, and the community's ability to manage the program independently after its completion. Successful empowerment strategies in the Lauje community include community capacity building, the use of local wisdom, and the development of partnership networks involving various stakeholders. A culturally responsive evaluation of a federal program with Indigenous communities emphasized the importance of adapting participatory evaluation models to ensure cultural relevance and empowerment (Williams et al., 2022). The success of several empowerment programs, although limited, can serve as a reference in designing more effective and sustainable programs in the future. Empowerment initiatives that integrate economic, social, and cultural aspects, supported by collaboration between the government, society, and the private sector, will strengthen resilience and have a positive impact on the people of Lauje.

Social Construction of Empowerment of Lauje Indigenous Community

The Social Construction Theory by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann explains how social reality is constructed through human interaction. This process includes 3 main stages, namely externalization, objectification, and internalization. These stages describe the complex dynamics between the individual as a creative agent and society as a structure that forms and is shaped by the individual. These three stages are interrelated dialectical processes, creating and maintaining what is considered an objective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) This theory is used by the author to unravel the Social Construction of Empowerment of the Lauje Indigenous Community in Parigi Moutong Regency.

Externalization Aspects

Externalization is the initial process by which individuals express their subjective ideas, ideas, or experiences into the social world. This process involves human action to create a social world through interaction and communication. Externalization includes not only physical actions, but also symbols, values, and norms articulated into social contexts. This process is active and creative, in which individuals shape their social environment based on their experiences and interpretations of the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Externalization in the empowerment of Lauje indigenous communities shows significant challenges in achieving their well-being. The top-down approach, which is often applied by external parties, such as governments or NGOs, causes indigenous communities to feel isolated and excluded from the planning and implementation of programs that are supposed to be aimed at them. This practice ignores local wisdom and indigenous community knowledge about resource management, which often leads to program unsustainability. Studies suggest that indigenous communities' active participation in empowerment programs significantly improves their sustainability and effectiveness (Smith et al., 2021). It is important to involve indigenous communities in every stage of the program through a participatory approach that respects local wisdom. Close collaboration between governments, NGOs, and indigenous peoples has proven to be the key to success in effective and sustainable empowerment. Research highlights that recognizing indigenous land rights and involving indigenous leaders in decision-making lead to more equitable and impactful empowerment initiatives (Jones & Ramirez, 2020). Recognition of indigenous peoples' land and natural resource rights, as well as gender equality in the empowerment process, are also important aspects that support the success of the program. Strengthening local capacity and leadership, as well as attention to program sustainability, will increase the independence and active role of indigenous communities in managing the program. With a collaborative,

participatory, and respectful approach to local wisdom, empowerment programs can achieve more effective, relevant, and sustainable outcomes for Lauje's indigenous community.

Aspects of Objectification

Objectification is the stage at which the result of externalization becomes something that is considered real, regardless of its creator. In this process, the social constructs produced by humans are institutionalized and widely accepted as objective facts. Objectification often involves social institutions, symbols, or norms that give legitimacy to what was previously only a subjective idea. Objectification allows social reality to be maintained over a long period of time, even beyond the generation of its creators (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) The phenomenon of objectivity in the empowerment program of the Lauje indigenous community illustrates an important shift in the social, cultural, and economic aspects of the community. This objectification occurs when traditional practices, such as agriculture based on local wisdom and traditional rituals, begin to be separated and seen as separate from daily life. Empowerment programs aimed at improving well-being often ignore local wisdom and focus on the application of technology or modern lifestyles that are not in harmony with traditional values. The process of objectification in the economic sector can be seen in the shift in agricultural systems that were once sustainable and based on local wisdom, now more dependent on external inputs that exacerbate people's dependence on technology and markets. In the social sphere, a change in more individualistic interaction patterns, which used to emphasize mutual cooperation, further reduces social solidarity and cohesion in the community. On the religious side, traditional rituals are beginning to be marginalized, especially among the younger generation, who prefer an orientation to modern life. This shift, while bringing increased access to technology and economic resources, also has long-term effects that undermine cultural identities and social structures. To avoid the negative impact of objectification, a more collaborative empowerment approach and respecting local wisdom and considering the needs and cultural values of indigenous peoples is urgently needed. This approach will allow the indigenous communities of Lauje to adapt to modernity without losing their cultural essence, creating better sustainability in empowerment programs.

Internalization Aspect

The process of internalization is an important stage where individuals and communities begin to adopt the values, norms, and social structures that have been established through externalization and objectification (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) In the context of the Lauje Indigenous Community, internalization occurs when people begin to see a new empowerment system as part of their identity. They began to combine the values of local wisdom with modern empowerment practices, such as the implementation of eco-friendly agriculture which is now considered part of their tradition. However, although this internalization process is important, challenges arise because there are still limitations in the application of empowerment values in daily life. One of the factors that hinders is the lack of sustainability of the empowerment program and the lack of intensive assistance after the program is completed. This has led to empowerment values, such as independence, participation, and sustainability, not being fully internalized in the culture of the Lauje community. Especially if the interpretation of knowledge obtained through information media is still limited (Dharma, 2018) In addition, the internalization of customary values related to social life, such as mutual cooperation, togetherness, and obedience to customary rules, also occurs automatically without external coercion. The Lauje people understand and live these values as

part of their identity, which is reflected in daily behavior such as in collective activities and natural resource management. The collective identity as part of the indigenous community is also internalized by the community, which strengthens their identity despite external pressure. Overall, the internalization process within the Lauje indigenous community shows that traditional and modern values can synergize in community empowerment, but the success of this internalization is highly dependent on the sustainability of the program and the active involvement of the community in each stage of empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Poverty in the Lauje Indigenous Community in Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi Province is a multidimensional issue shaped by limited access to basic services, challenging geographical conditions, and social discrimination. While empowerment programs, such as the Village SDGs initiative, aim to alleviate poverty, their effectiveness remains hindered by infrastructure limitations and economic dependence on middlemen. The social construction of the Lauje community, which is rooted in mutual cooperation and solidarity, plays a crucial role in shaping their response to these programs. However, modernization and shifting social values threaten the sustainability of their social capital, which is essential for long-term resilience. To enhance the success of empowerment initiatives, it is imperative to adopt an approach that is sensitive to local wisdom and cultural dynamics, ensuring community-driven participation and sustainable development.

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