

Research Horizon

Vol. 3, no. 4, (2023), 378-390

Website: <https://journal.lifescifi.com/index.php/RH/index>

Enhancing Community Participation for Sustainable Coastal Empowerment: A Case Study of the Resilient Coastal Area Development Program in Central Java

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Received : 14 June 2023

Revised : 26 August 2023

Accepted : 7 September 2023

Abstract

This study aims to describe the issues and problems related to community participation in the empowerment program entitled the Resilient Coastal Area Development Program (*Program Pengembangan Kawasan Pesisir Tangguh* or PKPT) in coastal areas. Additionally, it discusses the importance of creating a participatory development model. This study holds significance due to the specific nature of PKPT implementation, which combines a top-down participation mechanism from the central government with a bottom-up approach involving northern coastal communities in Central Java. The research employs a qualitative method, utilizing an action research approach. The study includes informants such as organizers of coastal communities, village heads, village officials, personnel from the Marine and Fisheries Service of Kebumen Regency in Central Java, among others. The results reveal that the PKPT program's implementation in coastal areas of Java, particularly in Kebumen, utilizes both top-down and bottom-up mechanisms, resulting in low community participation in the substantive implementation of PKPT. Consequently, this lack of participation affects the sustainability of the empowerment program. This study presents a participatory development model expected to serve as a reference for organizing sustainable empowerment programs in coastal areas in the future.

Keywords

Resilience, Community, Empowerment Program, Sustainability, Participation

1. Introduction

Several studies have evaluated community participation in empowerment programs in coastal areas. Dewan et al. (2014) discussed participation in Bangladesh related to participatory water management in coastal areas, while Osei-Kufuor (2014) evaluated empowerment programs, particularly the participation of coastal communities in Ghana. Shaffril et al. (2015) studied the awareness of housewives and students in coastal communities regarding climate change compared to fishermen in Malaysia. Bockstael's research (2016) emphasized the necessity for effective public participation in managing coastal resources in Brazil. Butt et al. (2018) also highlighted the importance of local community involvement in preserving Pakistan's coastal areas. Similarly, Mishra's study (2022) in Bangladesh concluded that community involvement is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of conservation programs.

Furthermore, several studies have assessed empowerment programs in various Indonesian coastal regions, conducted by experts such as Rachmanzah (2014) in Kerawang, West Java, Neliyanti (2013) in Dumai, Riau, Anggraini (2015) in Malang, East Java, and Widiartanto (2022) in Batang, Central Java. Warren (2016) explored the role of government resources in managing coastal communities in Bali, while Warouw et al. (2018) underscored the significance of community participation in sustaining coastal tourism. However, none of these studies specifically address the issues and challenges associated with community participation in empowerment programs that incorporate both top-down and bottom-up approaches in coastal areas. This study aims to fill this gap by examining community participation issues in the implementation of the Resilient Coastal Area Development Program (Program Pengembangan Kawasan Pesisir Tangguh or PKPT) program in Central Java's coastal regions, which utilizes a combination of top-down and bottom-up mechanisms, and by highlighting the importance of establishing a participatory development model.

The focus on coastal areas gained prominence with President Joko Widodo's introduction of the Indonesia Global Maritime Axis (GMA) Policy in 2014 (Sambhi, 2015). This policy aimed to position Indonesia as a self-reliant, progressive, strong maritime nation dedicated to national interests. As part of this vision, the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries initiated the PKPT program, designed to enhance coastal areas through the development of human resources, resources, infrastructure, disaster prevention, and climate change adaptation. The PKPT program, which commenced in 2012, has benefited 24 provinces, including 47 regencies/cities and 141 villages/administrative villages.

Central Java Province saw the implementation of the PKPT program in five regencies: Brebes, Pekalongan, Demak, Kendal, and Kebumen. Among these, Kebumen Regency stands out as the most economically challenged. The Marine and Fisheries Service oversees the PKPT program in Kebumen, focusing on three villages: Jogosimo, Tegalretno, and Tanggulangin. These villages were selected based on various criteria, including poverty rates, vulnerability to disasters, economic potential, slum areas, inadequate standard services, and coastal degradation.

The PKPT program represents a hybrid approach combining both top-down and bottom-up mechanisms, resulting in some ambiguity between the two. This has underscored the need to examine community participation closely. This study's objective is to provide insights into local community participation within this empowerment program, which operates using both mechanisms. By doing so, it highlights the significance of a model that strengthens local

involvement and supports the program's success. The paper is divided into two parts: the first explores the debate surrounding top-down and bottom-up mechanisms' impact on community participation, while the second emphasizes the importance of a model to enhance the empowerment program.

2. Method

This research utilizes a qualitative method, enabling precise analysis of phenomena relevant to the problem's characteristics and research objectives. Moreover, this study employs action research (Creswell, 2009) to develop a participatory development model, offering an alternative solution to address the issue of limited community participation in coastal community empowerment programs.

The researcher applies purposive sampling, as recommended by Harrison (2007), to select informants based on research requirements. This includes representatives from the village government, community participants in the PKPT program, organizers of coastal communities in Jogosimo Village and Tegalretno, village heads, village officials, PKPT team members, personnel from the Marine and Fisheries Service of Kebumen Regency, and other respected figures. Additionally, the snowball technique is employed to identify additional informants based on acquired information (Harrison, 2007).

Data collection methods encompass focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation (Punch, 2006). These methods aim to capture information regarding village community involvement in the PKPT program, emerging challenges, obstacles in formulating empowerment programs, and other relevant aspects. Subsequently, data is meticulously processed and analyzed, involving steps such as data clarification, theoretical abstraction, formulation of fundamental questions, and the drawing of conclusions (Silbergh, 2001).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Approaches in Community Participation

Local participation within coastal communities primarily encompasses the engagement of fishermen residing in rural areas. This involvement takes various forms, including contributing ideas in forums, participating in discussions to make significant decisions, offering suggestions and constructive criticism when determining village programs, interacting with village officials and development program managers, partaking in monitoring and evaluation initiatives, and providing resources. In the context of the PKPT program's implementation, the local community's participation has encompassed every aspect of the program, including ideation, active involvement, supervision, and various related activities.

Throughout the two-year implementation of the PKPT program, village officials in both Jogosimo and Tegalretno villages facilitated community involvement in the planning, execution, and oversight of the program. A significant platform for this involvement was the community meeting, allowing individuals from the grassroots level, such as the neighborhood association and citizens association, to collaborate on the development programs within their respective

areas. Furthermore, the PKPT Program provided the community with an opportunity to align these programs with the medium-term village development plans.

The process of formulating the PKPT program for 2015 in both Jogosimo and Tegalretno Villages commenced with several stages for developing the medium-term village development plans. The genesis of these plans lay in the community meeting, resulting in documents containing activity lists based on community needs and preferences. These documents were subsequently consolidated in community meeting sessions at the village level to establish the priority scale for these activities. The agreed-upon activities were then incorporated into the medium-term village development plans, which served as a blueprint for determining the activities of the PKPT program, officially known as the development plan of Coastal Area.

This five-year program was meticulously designed with reference to the technical guidelines of PKPT issued by the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries, with adjustments made in collaboration with the Marine and Fisheries Service of Kebumen Regency. The agreed-upon work program in the development plan of coastal area, which aimed to classify activities by assigning scores and schedules, essentially creating a priority ranking. The technical guidelines of PKPT served as the fundamental basis for approving the proposed activities within the program. Any ideas within the PKPT program that did not align with the technical guideline requirements would not gain approval from the Marine and Fisheries Service of Kebumen Regency.

In the subsequent year, the compilation and execution of the PKPT program for both Jogosimo and Tegalretno villages in 2016 commenced with a comprehensive review of the development plan of coastal area. The primary objective was to reevaluate the PKPT program's planning, taking into account recent issues and challenges while establishing a priority scale. The review process of the development plan of coastal area involved public consultations, community meeting, and inter-community meeting. Villages collectively assessed the development plan of coastal area, factoring in the coastal area profiles, outcomes of community meeting, medium-term village development plans, and policies from neighboring villages. Public participation was integral, with individuals offering suggestions aligned with contemporary challenges. Furthermore, the review of the development plan of coastal area necessitated consideration of each village's medium-term development plan. Prior to approval by the head of the Marine and Fisheries Service of Kebumen Regency in the program's second year (2016), the development plan of coastal area underwent a review test with public involvement. Ultimately, the finalized development plan of coastal area document was endorsed by the Marine and Fisheries Service of Kebumen Regency. A detailed overview of public participation throughout the two consecutive years of PKPT program implementation is provided in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 and Table 2 show how people from the Jogosimo and Tegalretno villages attended, undertook, and participated in the implementation of PKPT program activities, such as training programs, procurement activities, and the provision of facilities and infrastructure. This means that community involvement is crucial for the success of PKPT activities. However, community participation is mainly descriptive, as the final determination of program activities is based on compliance with the technical guidelines of PKPT, which may not always align with the community's wishes. Although the regulation of programming activities, including the medium-term village development plans and PKPT, provides ample opportunities for community participation in the preparation of program activities, community involvement in the preparation

of the development plan of coastal area and PKPT program review is not fully maximized in practice.

Table 1. Jogosimo Publics Participation for PKPT Program in 2015-2016

2015 Activity Program	Public Participation	2016 Activity Program	Public Participation
Training to cultivate freshwater fish	Followed by 20 members of a fish farming group	Repairment of Lukulo Tourism Road	Conducted in 60 days and followed by 8 people
Counseling and coaching for a group of freshwater fish farmers	Followed by 20 members of a fish farming group	Building captive breeding for turtle	Conducted in 30 days and followed by 6 people
Procurement facilities for fish processing	Done by Coastal Communities Group and facilitator	Building Tourism Information Post	Conducted in 30 days and followed by 4 people
Procurement facilities for catfish cultivation	Done by Coastal Communities Group and facilitator	Building Tourism Gate	Conducted in 30 days and followed by 2 people
Constructing <i>talud</i> (land barriers)	Done by Coastal Communities Group and people with mutual cooperation	Procurement of boat tours and safety	Conducted by Coastal Communities Group with community support
Constructing <i>talud</i> (land barriers)	Done by Coastal Communities Group and people with mutual cooperation	Procurement of boat tours and safety	Conducted by Coastal Communities Group with community support

Table 2. Public Participation Tegalretno in PKPT Program in 2015-2016

2015 Activity Program	Public Participation	2016 Activity Program	Public Participation
Training to make <i>nata de coco</i>	Followed by 10 members of the group	Building bridge	Conducted in 60 days and followed by 8 people
Training to make palm sugar	Followed by 10 members of the group	Procurement of fishing boat	Done by Coastal Communities Group with community support
Procurement of water pump	Done by Coastal Communities Group and facilitator	Procurement of two canoe boats	Done by Coastal Communities Group with community support
Procurement facilities to make <i>nata de coco</i>	Done by Coastal Communities Group and facilitator		
Constructing <i>talud</i> (land barriers) and concrete rebate	Done by Coastal Communities Group with community support through mutual cooperation		

Moreover, the actual program of activities included in the five-year development plan of coastal area (2015-2019) does not fully align with the wishes of the community. The orientation of PKPT was based on the regulations of PKPT technical guidelines from the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries and obtaining approval from the head of the Marine and Fisheries Service, which did not begin with community suggestions. Instead, the program activities were based on the election of existing programs in the medium-term village development plans of each village in 2015-2019, which were in accordance with the PKPT technical guidelines issued by the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries and must align with the Marine and Fisheries Service of Kebumen Regency program.

To manage PKPT, the Coastal Communities Group was established, with 4-7 members according to PKPT technical guidelines. However, in reality, each village that received PKPT has

5 members in the Coastal Communities Group. The institutional presence of Coastal Communities Group is a manifestation of negotiation between top-down and bottom-up policy practices. While the Coastal Communities Group exists as a representation of community participation, it also brings state rules in terms of managing PKPT program activities. The recruitment of Coastal Communities Group members as potential PKPT managers at the village level considers their experience in managing previous empowerment programs such as PNPM, along with certain requirements such as not being village officials, civil servants, or police, and residing in the village. Thus, although PKPT's spirit is to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches, the fact shows that local community participation is actually limited by these rules.

The identification of problems in community participation in the PKPT program in 2015-2016 reveals several key issues. Firstly, the reliance on medium-term village development plans as the main reference for program proposals limited the accommodation of community suggestions, diminishing the overall level of participation. Secondly, the community aspirations forum became more of a procedural requirement rather than an avenue for genuine input, as it had to align strictly with PKPT technical guidelines from the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries and gain authorization from the Head of the Marine and Fisheries Service. Thirdly, the socialization efforts were insufficient and failed to reach the grassroots level, leading to a lack of understanding among some community members regarding the PKPT program. Fourthly, despite their dedicated efforts, members of the Coastal Communities Group received no compensation for their hard work, posing a challenge to their maximal participation, especially considering their economic circumstances.

Additionally, the involvement of Team 9 from the local government, while monitoring and evaluating the PKPT program at the regency level, did not align with the program's intended goals. The primary output of PKPT, Village-owned Enterprises, did not receive adequate input from the Village Community Empowerment Board, the sector responsible for its development. This disconnect hindered the effective channeling of villagers' wishes and aspirations related to Village-owned Enterprises. Furthermore, there was no clear mechanism for following up on proposals that could not be accommodated in the first and second years of the Development Plan of Coastal Area, leaving the community without a structured way to address these proposals. Lastly, a significant obstacle to ideal participation stemmed from differing perceptions regarding the types of activities eligible for PKPT funding. While PKPT focused on coastal and marine issues, there were instances of certain elites pushing for activities aligned with their interests, resulting in various activities representing these elite interests.

The PKPT is an empowerment program characterized by its stimulant-based approach and intermittent implementation. Originally, the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries had planned the PKPT program in Kebumen Regency to span three years: 2015, 2016, and 2017. However, in 2017, the funding for PKPT from the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries either faced delays or was reduced. In such a context, empowerment programs with a top-down component indeed contend with standard and somewhat intricate administrative provisions and mechanisms. PKPT essentially functions as a stimulus for enhancing the resilience of coastal communities but does not provide continuous assistance. This aligns with the ideal concept of community empowerment, wherein the program's duration depends on the community's progress towards

self-sufficiency. The swifter the community develops towards independence, the shorter the empowerment program's duration.

Given that the PKPT empowerment program is stimulant-based and lasts only two years, it is crucial to strengthen community participation throughout its lifecycle, starting with planning, progressing through monitoring, and concluding with evaluation. This is essential to bolster the success and sustainability of the empowerment program, whether it concludes or transitions to another program. Additionally, since PKPT focuses on building resilient coastal areas, the active participation of coastal communities significantly influences the program's success and sustainability. In this context, the government, both at the central and local levels, serves as a facilitator rather than a dominant actor in determining the form and type of community empowerment activities. As an effective facilitator, the government should provide ample space for community input and create mechanisms that stimulate the emergence of creativity, ideas, and beliefs among the community in shaping programs that directly concern them.

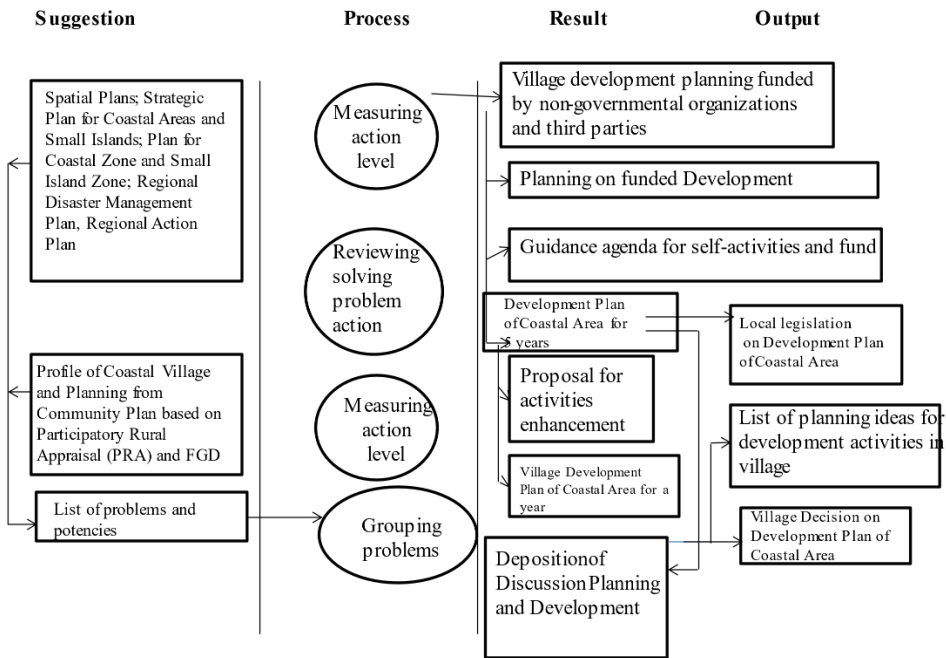


Figure 1. PKPT Activity Program

In the implementation of the PKPT program in Kebumen Regency, program activity preparation follows the path set by the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries through the development plan of coastal area (Figure 1). The top-down aspects encompass the Spatial Plan, Coastal Strategic Plan, Regional Action Plan, and others. The top-down approach relies heavily on the Ministry's Coastal Area Development Plan, which serves as the primary reference.

Subsequently, the process involves identifying key issues and problems in the recipient villages of the PKPT program through action research and focus group discussions. However, these efforts must align with the medium-term village development plans, which can limit the

inclusion of community-proposed programs. To address this, Coastal Communities Group managers, in collaboration with village officials, prioritize programs for inclusion in the Coastal Area Development Plan. The proposal for the PKPT activity program in the Coastal Area Development Plan is submitted by village officials to the Head of the Marine and Fisheries Service. The PKPT technical guidelines serve as the primary source for program approval. At the village level, the Coastal Area Development Plan is ratified through Local Legislation.

Analyzing the program flowchart, it becomes evident that certain aspects hinder the empowerment program's implementation. The initial stages, including the Regional Spatial Plan, Coastal Strategic Plan, and Regional Action Plan, may restrict the community's creativity, ideas, and confidence in program preparation. Empowering communities requires ensuring that they can freely express their opinions and ideas without limitations. Therefore, the community's ability and willingness to voice their suggestions should be highly valued to foster confidence in expressing their aspirations.

Moreover, the program flowchart does not depict the steps for identifying problems and potentials, starting from smaller community units (neighborhood units) to larger units (villages). Large community forums can be intimidating, especially for marginalized and economically disadvantaged groups. This can inhibit the free expression of opinions and ideas, particularly within coastal communities, which often face vulnerabilities. A critical weakness in the program flowchart is the absence of a forum that allows the community to have control over whether proposed program activities are adopted as real activities. This leaves the potential for pseudo-participation, where community voices are considered but not integrated into decision-making. This issue aligns with findings from other empowerment programs, such as those in Bangladesh, where community-based organizations' involvement in water resource management did not lead to inclusive participation (Dewan et al., 2014).

3.2 The Participatory Village-Level Development Model

The PKPT programming model will be compared to an alternative participatory development model at the village level as a true effort to put forward the views and wishes of local people, starting from the lowest level of the neighborhood association and citizen association.

The participatory development model outlined above emphasizes that every stage of development and empowerment programs should commence with the process of problem selection and potential identification (Figure 2). In coastal communities, rural residents are well-positioned to identify such issues and potentials, given their close connection to local natural resources. This aligns with Shaffril et al.'s (2015) study, which explored the influence of local characteristics on climate change awareness. Their findings indicated that housewives/retirees and students exhibit greater awareness of climate change compared to fishermen. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of awareness in supporting effective sea and coastal management. Coastal communities residing in these areas possess an intimate connection with their natural surroundings and specific local traits that play a crucial role in the development of coastal regions. Identifying problems and potentialities is a fundamental aspect of program preparation because each program aims to address existing societal issues, making understanding, discovering, and acknowledging these challenges paramount.

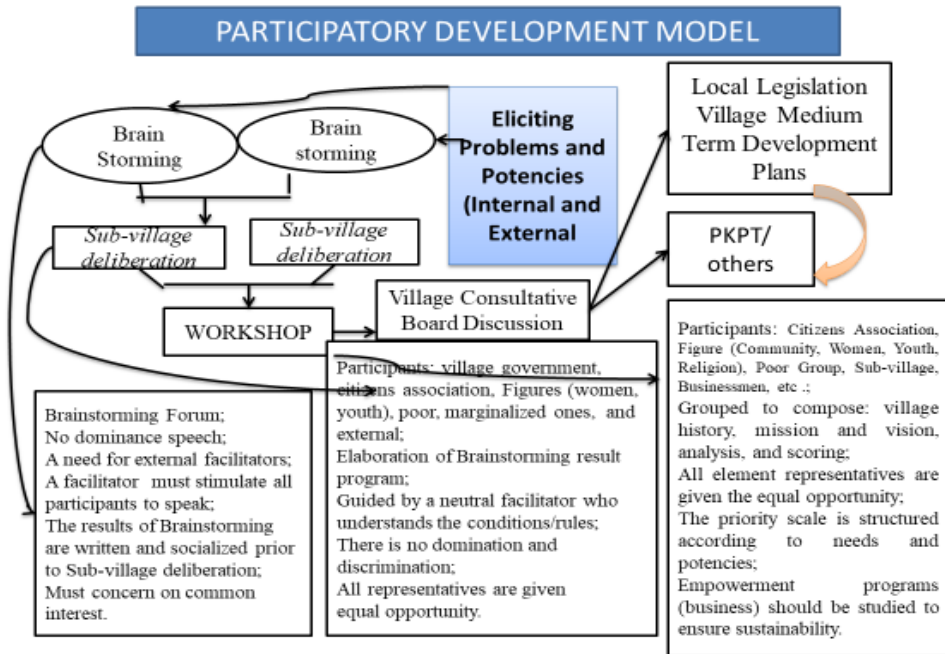


Figure 2. Participatory Development Model

Additionally, to resolve these issues, it is imperative to explore potential resources that can be harnessed in addressing these problems. If the community is proficient in identifying problems, they can internally collect this information. However, when community conditions are not conducive, external parties can guide the community in analyzing these problems and identifying their root causes. The problem-solving process is most effective in smaller groups where members are familiar with one another, minimizing potential psychological barriers to expressing opinions. Within a village, the smallest group is the neighborhood association, which hosts the brainstorming forum. This forum serves as a platform for collective problem-solving, aspiration gathering, and program development preparation, involving the entire community. Effective facilitation by an external facilitator who can lead discussions and encourage members to voice their opinions is crucial. An external facilitator is preferred to minimize potential biases or dominance by specific groups or individuals. Brainstorming outcomes at the neighborhood association level are comprehensively documented and guide delegates from the neighborhood association when attending the citizens association brainstorming forum.

The citizens association brainstorming forum is an elaboration program involving various elements such as representatives from neighborhood associations, local government officials, community leaders, youth representatives, members of marginalized communities, and individuals facing poverty. External facilitators guide the citizens association brainstorming forum to ensure that the resulting program addresses societal issues fairly, realistically, and in a balanced manner. To develop the aforementioned development plan, this forum must foster a sense of community, provide opportunities for all elements to voice their perspectives, and prevent dominance by any particular group. The outcomes of the citizens association

brainstorming forum are documented comprehensively to serve as a foundational reference at the sub-village level (Susilowati & Mafruhah, 2023).

Sub-Village Deliberation serves as a platform for discussing development at the sub-village level and further elaborates on plans generated during discussions at various Citizen Associations, including the neighborhood association and Citizens Association forums. Participants include representatives from all segments of the community, and discussions are conducted in an inclusive, equitable, and non-dominating atmosphere to produce a development plan that fairly addresses societal challenges. The outcomes of this forum are subsequently taken to a development workshop at the village level.

Village-level workshops are forums for discussing and refining programs originating from the results of Sub-Village Deliberation. These forums bring together representatives from the village government, neighborhood association, Citizens Association, community leaders, religious figures, youth leaders, women, marginalized individuals, the impoverished, and local businesses. The presence of external facilitators, well-versed in leading discussions, community assessment, and development prioritization, enhances the quality of these workshops. The dynamics within this forum should encourage open expression of aspirations and provide equal opportunities for all participants. An inclusive atmosphere fosters a more horizontal relationship among involved parties, breaking down sharp divisions between the government and the community. This aligns with Matbor's model of community participation, emphasizing the importance of horizontal relationships among stakeholders involved in community development (Matbor, 2008). Sarinas & Paragon's (2015) study underscores the importance of collaboration between local communities and governments in managing coastal resources, highlighting the need for monitoring community participation in coastal resource management. Lindstrom & Larson's (2016) research similarly demonstrates that tourism development in coastal communities in Sweden should be community-based.

Furthermore, all activities must be grounded in fundamental references, with business community endeavors supported by proper business feasibility studies. Consequently, the prioritization of activities based on community needs and potentials enhances the sustainability of community empowerment programs. The results of the village-level workshop serve as the materials discussed by the village government in conjunction with the Village Consultative Board. This board, a village-level governmental body, plays a role in deliberating and approving village regulations, accommodating and channeling the community's aspirations, and monitoring the village head's performance. The workshop forum represents the final stage in program development before its formalization in local legislation, such as the local legislation on medium-term village development plans.

Based on the description of the participatory development model in coastal areas, several important findings emerge. Firstly, the participatory development process commences with the identification of issues faced by coastal communities. This involves capturing the problems encountered. Secondly, it involves exploring the potential of coastal communities to address these identified problems effectively. To facilitate this process, the involvement of a neutral external facilitator is crucial. The facilitator's role is to assist the community in understanding the issues and recognizing their potential solutions. The subsequent stage delves deeper into these problems

and potentials within small groups, typically comprised of several households, such as neighborhood associations or neighborhood pillars.

Importantly, the facilitator should be an impartial outsider to ensure neutrality regarding community interests. The outcomes of discussions within these neighborhood pillars are thoroughly documented and then elevated to higher forums. This progression typically involves discussions at the sub-village and village levels, depending on the household associations present in each respective region. An essential supporting element for the participatory development model is the availability of feasibility studies related to the types of programs or businesses to be developed by coastal residents.

Throughout each step of the participatory development process, a conducive environment is emphasized, allowing every participating citizen to fearlessly express their aspirations. Dominance by particular individuals or groups is actively discouraged, fostering a more horizontal and democratic exchange of ideas. This approach to democratically, comprehensively, and horizontally exploring the problems and potential of coastal residents can be applied across various community groups, ensuring equality in participation. The level of the forum established aligns with the household associations existing within each village, tailored to their respective regions.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of an empowerment program, which combines top-down and bottom-up approaches, can lead to uncertainty in providing space and time for local community participation. The requirement to adhere to top-down rules enforces the application of the top-down method, while the participatory method, as provided through focus group discussions, creates confusion when determining the inclusion of activities in the medium-term village development plans. An issue arises when PKPT technical guidelines are inappropriately positioned as the primary reference for the development plan of the coastal area by local government.

This study proposes a participatory development model for coastal areas, emphasizing broad and equitable opportunities for citizens to voice their aspirations. Forums are established, ranging from small household groups to village-level discussions. Implementing this model in empowerment programs within coastal areas can enhance community participation, from the lowest unit, neighbor associations to the village level. Prioritizing local participation in the implementation of empowerment programs aligns with residents' needs and positively impacts their well-being. This democratic participation model for coastal communities is applicable in various coastal regions.

The participatory development model introduced in this study can strengthen empowerment program models for coastal areas. Coastal development cannot be standardized across regions due to differing characteristics, and implementing a one-size-fits-all coastal development model as dictated by the central government may not yield optimal results, given that technical guidelines in empowerment programs often diverge from community interests. In the future, further research focusing on the development of coastal communities, with a priority on local characteristics and interests, is crucial, particularly considering that the welfare of coastal communities in Indonesia lags behind that of other communities.

Acknowledgments

Special gratitude is expressed to University Excellence Research in 2017, funded by Universitas Jenderal Soedirman.

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