



From Collective Action to Economic Sustainability: A Case of Community Participation in Local Tourism Development

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis partisipasi komunitas dan pemberdayaan dalam pengelolaan pariwisata berbasis Goa Pindul di Bejiharjo, Gunungkidul, yang dikelola oleh BUMDes Maju Mandiri. Dengan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dinamika struktur pemberdayaan, distribusi kekuasaan, dan peran perempuan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa partisipasi kontraktual menghasilkan bias pemberdayaan dan kontestasi kekuasaan antar-agensi. Pemberdayaan yang efektif membutuhkan distribusi kekuasaan yang setara melalui komunikasi kepemimpinan deliberatif. Selain itu, meski peran perempuan penting, keterlibatan mereka masih terkonsentrasi pada peran pendukung, mencerminkan bias gender dalam pemberdayaan. Penelitian ini menekankan perlunya perbaikan struktur pemberdayaan yang lebih inklusif dan berkelanjutan. Implikasinya adalah perlunya revisi regulasi desa, peningkatan kesadaran gender, serta penguatan kapasitas komunitas untuk mencapai pariwisata berkelanjutan berbasis komunitas.

Keywords

Keywords: Goa Pindul, Local Tourism Development, Community Empowerment

Abstract

This study examines community participation and empowerment in managing Goa Pindul-based tourism in Bejiharjo, Gunungkidul, managed by BUMDes Maju Mandiri. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores empowerment structures, power distribution, and women's roles. Findings reveal that contractual participation leads to empowerment bias and power contestation among agencies. Effective empowerment requires equitable power distribution through deliberative leadership communication. Moreover, while women play significant roles, their involvement remains confined to supporting functions, reflecting gender bias in empowerment. The study emphasizes the need to improve inclusive and sustainable empowerment structures. Implications include revising village regulations, enhancing gender awareness, and strengthening community capacity to achieve sustainable community-based tourism.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government has identified tourism as a critical driver of economic growth and social development, establishing it as a national development priority. The government established a dedicated ministry with the overarching objective of formulating policy decisions about the tourism

and creative economy sector. This was achieved by enacting Presidential Regulation (PP) Number 96 of 2019, establishing the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Moreover, the PP above oversees the coordination and synchronization of policy implementation, the provision of guidance and administrative support, the management of

state property and assets, and the supervision of the implementation of the duties of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. The empowerment of the tourism sector is an indispensable element in the process of local and national development. In order to achieve sustainable growth, it is essential to consider tourism in the context of a range of interrelated factors, including social, economic, cultural, political and environmental phenomena (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021).

The central government is actively encouraging local governments to prioritize tourism development, and Gunungkidul District is one such government that has adopted this approach. The district of Gunungkidul is characterized by the presence of karst hills in nearly all of its regions and coastal areas in the south. These present a significant opportunity for the development of natural tourism, which will, in turn, attract visitors. Before the pandemic, Gunungkidul received an average of three million tourists annually. These directly correlate with the acquisition of local revenue (PAD) derived from retribution, hotel and restaurant taxes, and others in the tourism sector, amounting to 27 billion Indonesian rupiah annually. The government of Gunungkidul is dedicated to implementing and advancing tourism initiatives. In order to achieve this objective, the government has assumed responsibility for establishing and managing village-owned enterprises (BUMDes/Kel) throughout the region. These are consistent with the broader trend of establishing BUMDes throughout Indonesia. It is anticipated that these village business units will enhance community welfare through the administration of existing potential, the generation of employment opportunities, augmented community income, and augmented village income (Arifin et al., 2020).

Studies of village economic development and the development of tourism potential through the establishment of BUMDes have been carried out by many scholars of tourism, development and community empowerment. Hastutik et al. (2021) deal with establishing and managing BUMDes Tirta Mandiri, Ponggok, and Klaten in the use of spring water sources to develop tourism potential through spatial planning and technological accessibility. In addition, the BUMDes also plays a role in managing business units and sharing sources with the community (Purnomo et al., 2020). It is regrettable that both studies merely categorize community participation as an indicator of empowerment activities without analyzing the empowerment process or selecting appropriate

models of empowerment and participation.

Another study on community participation models for BUMDes management concerning development in one sub-district in Pacitan district was conducted by Arumdani & Kriswibowo (2022). The structure of BUMDes was elucidated through the utilization of the Can do, like to, Enable to, Asked to, and Responded to (CLEAR) approach. The result is that the BUMDes structure has the capacity, skills, organizational experience, commitment, and village government facilitation necessary for the operationalization of BUMDes. This study does place the community participation process in the development of community welfare using the concept of empowerment. However, the above study considers participation as an end result indicator rather than a dynamic process.

The development of the tourism potential of Goa Pindul in Bejiharjo Village, Gunungkidul District, has been the subject of numerous studies by researchers specializing in tourism and social sciences. These studies have predominantly focused on the conflicts that have arisen between the local community and landowners about the utilisation of Goa Pindul as a tourist attraction Anjari (2015), Nurohman (2017), (Safitri & Dewi, 2019). While some studies approach the topic of tourism management in Goa Pindul from a community perspective, Toni (2018) highlighted community representation in the management of Goa Pindul tourism, while Widiastuti & Masyhari Makhasi (2020) analysis of the discourse between BUMDes and dominant tourism operators highlights the tensions between different value systems and concepts of empowerment. However, the study does not address the structural aspects of empowerment and participation relations among agencies or examine the efforts and models of participation in the development context.

This research aims to examine the role of community participation in the development of BUMDes and village local economies, with a particular focus on the context of tourism development. In the initial session, the researcher will elucidate the intertwined concepts of participation, empowerment, development, and tourism, which are fundamental to understanding the structure. In the subsequent session, the researcher will examine the empowerment structure and the relational dynamics between the agencies (community, village government and BUMDes management) in tourism empowerment and development. Furthermore, the researcher will examine the dynamics of participation between agencies, focusing on women's participation. This study will entail investigating differences in views

on empowerment, changes in power structures and disputes due to differences in profit distribution. The research location is Bejiharjo Village, one of the villages in Gunungkidul with the tourism potential of Goa Pindul. This study has the effect of reviving the village's local economy.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. Case study research is defined as a qualitative methodology in which researchers investigate real-world, specific, and bounded systems (cases) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through comprehensive and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and present case descriptions and case themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The author selected Gunungkidul District as the research location since, according to data from the Ministry of Villages, it has the most significant number of BUMDesa in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), namely 167. The other regencies with the highest number of BUMDesa are Bantul (65), Kulon Progo (92) and Sleman (55).

The author focused on community participation in the local economy and the development of BUMDes Maju Mandiri, given the latter's experience in managing and developing natural cave-based exploration tourism. The informants in this study were four representatives of the tourism awareness community (Pokdarwis) or operators, namely SG, LT, BG, AW. Furthermore, the author conducted interviews with several individuals involved in the development of BUMDes, including the Director of BUMDes Maju Mandiri, the Head of Bejiharjo Village, and employees of the Village Community Empowerment Office (DPMD) of Gunungkidul District. The research was conducted between July and September 2023, and all informants consented to publishing their in-depth interviews. Secondary data sources were obtained through a desk review of various existing sources, including books, project reports, laws and regulations, journals and news articles, all of which had valid sources based on related topics.

The data analysis in this research was conducted systematically to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The author commenced by organizing the data collected from various sources, including interviews, observations and documents, in order to produce a detailed description. Furthermore, the researchers conducted coding, identified themes and extracted pertinent patterns. In case studies, data triangulation is conducted to ensure the

validity of the findings by comparing the results from various sources, thereby providing a more profound and nuanced insight into the case under study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Notion of Empowerment and Participation in Sustainable Tourism

The discourses on sustainable development, empowerment, and tourism are intertwined and connected to each other in a complex study that requires further research (Gutierrez, 2023). The concept of sustainable development, as outlined in the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987, can be understood as a process that seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Mensah & Ricart Casadevall, 2019: 6). The concept of empowerment, according to Zimmerman (2000: 59), can be operationalized at the individual, organizational and community levels, to transform behaviour, mobilise resources and opportunities, and effecting change in socio-political structures. The topic of empowerment is closely related to and informs the field of tourism studies (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021a).

Scheyvens & van der Watts' (2021) conceptualization of development and empowerment is based on a six-dimensional framework, encompassing economic, social, environmental, political, psychological and cultural dimensions. This relationship is consistent with the global agenda on sustainable development, which places the economic pillar at the center, with the objective of serving the people (social pillar) who live in a particular environment (environmental pillar). In order to achieve sustainable development goals, the six dimensions must be supported by conditions that can activate them, such as social capital, customary practices, market and credit access, capacity building and business, governance, law and policy, and political will.

Following the principles of sustainable development, the tourism industry is characterized by intricate interconnections between individuals, communities and countries. According to Leiper (1979: 403), tourism can be defined as an independent journey undertaken by an individual or group whereby they temporarily inhabit one or more places for a period of more than one night. Each travel route is imbued with its intrinsic value. This perspective is inextricably linked to a number of factors that shape tourism, including geography, behavior, industry and the environment. McCabe (2024: 4) posits that tourism is characterized by relational elements at three distinct levels: micro

(individual interactions), meso (individual relationships with groups, organizations and countries) and macro (interactions within broader global structures). At the micro level, tourism encompasses leisure and recreational activities. At the meso level, tourism is characterized by the coexistence of production and consumption. At the macro level, tourism is associated with formulating policies, strategies and development plans that directly impact specific regions.

Gutierrez (2023) sought to establish a connection between the realms of development, participation and empowerment in the context of tourism through the application of Wilson's (2022), Scheyvens & van der Watts' (2021a), and Arnstein's (1969) conceptual framework. The concept proposed by Gutierrez is noteworthy for its ability to encapsulate Scheyvens' multi-dimensional conceptualization of economic, social, environmental, political and cultural empowerment, as well as the 'ladder of participation' introduced by Arnstein. In community-based tourism, development, participation and empowerment are mutually reinforcing elements. Consequently, the construct of thinking is shaped by inter-agency interactions that influence the structure of empowerment, as evidenced by the role of the professional group (Edwards, 2010).

The concept of community participation encompasses the process of involvement and engagement in the planning, implementation, monitoring and supervision of development initiatives. For communities to be involved in the entirety of the development cycle, they must possess the capacity to comprehend, analyze and interpret events and potential, thereby enabling them to make well-informed decisions and to assume an active role in development. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the community decision-making process takes time and effort. The capacity to make decisions is not inherently present within the community. This process necessitates authorization from the intervening actor, enabling the community to determine its own course of action autonomously. To overcome the obstacles posed by the community's limited access to information, knowledge, and skills, the concept of empowerment bridges the gap in relations between social actors (Friedmann, 1992). In development practice, concurrent movements toward participation and empowerment shape the very nature of development itself (Mohan & Stokke, 2000).

Community Participation in Tourism Development Through the Role of Village-Owned Enterprises

Goa Pindul reached its current level of development with the pioneering efforts of Subagyo, Tukidjo, Ratmin, and Paryo, who initiated this project in the 2010s. The initial plan to utilize Goa Pindul as a tourist destination was met with opposition from village elders, who cited the maintenance of local customs and culture as a primary concern. Conversely, the Gunungkidul District government had also initiated the utilization of Goa Pindul as a tourist attraction in the same year; however, this was not accompanied by the immediate implementation of concrete measures to facilitate the development. The impetus to develop Goa Pindul as a tourist destination gained further momentum with the receipt of benefits from the Bejiharjo subdistrict from the National Rural Independent Community Empowerment Programme (PNPM Perdesaan). As a result of this initiative, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) proposed training in tourism management and tour guiding for the communities involved. Some Pokdarwis members received training from the local government, including safety training, and obtained certification as tour guides. Subsequently, some Goa Pindul tourism initiators established Pokdarwis or tour operators to support Goa Pindul tourism services. Currently, 12 tour tourism operators serve visitors from all over.

The success of Goa Pindul tourism is inextricably linked to the challenges that accompany it. As the popularity of Goa Pindul as a tourist destination increased, so too did the incidence of conflict. One such conflict occurred in 2014 when the status of the land above Goa Pindul was disputed (Anjari, 2015). One of the key figures involved was reported to the police by a landowner on charges of land appropriation. The conflict was eventually resolved by regulating natural resource authority at the village and district levels, as stipulated in district regulations (Nurohman, 2017). It was subsequently revealed that the purported 'sacredness' of Goa Pindul, which had been cited as a rationale for rejecting tourism development, was a means by which landowners above the cave sought to protect their economic activities related to the collection of swallow nests within the cave.

It is essential to acknowledge that the initial development of the tourism sector in the Goa Pindul area was driven by the local community prior to the involvement of the BUMDesa in management. Following the enactment of the village law and the village minister's regulation on

the establishment and dissolution of BUMDes, Bejiharjo Village resolved to establish a BUMDes, duly constituted on 16 December 2016. The establishment of the BUMDes, operating under the name 'BUMDes Maju Mandiri,' was formalized through the enactment of Bejiharjo Village Regulation No. 6/2016 on the Establishment of BUMDes. The advent of BUMDesa represents a pivotal moment in the extended process of village development. The impetus for socio-economic development at the village level through BUMDes can be traced back to the enactment of Law 32/2004 on Regional Government. Subsequently, the legislation was amended with the introduction of Law 12/2008, which did not provide villages with the authority to invest in BUMDes from village assets (Arifin et al., 2020). Following the enactment of Law 6/2014 on Villages, villages were granted the mandate to develop the socio-economy at the village level to improve community welfare.

It is anticipated that BUMDesa will facilitate the community's socio-economic development, with a particular focus on accelerating the provision of services and safeguarding the interests of citizens. These will be achieved despite several challenges, including those related to management, organizational structure, governance, transparency and technology. One of the primary business units of BUMDes Maju Mandiri is the management of Goa Pindul tourism. BUMDes Maju Mandiri has established a regulatory framework that requires all operators to possess a government-issued business license. This license is in the form of a *Commanditaire Venootschap (CV)*, which is more commonly known as a partnership. It is a prerequisite for operators to possess this licence to serve visitors.

Furthermore, BUMDes Maju Mandiri establishes a uniform visitor fee for all operators and participates in distributing the tourism retribution tariff. The tariff for the minimum package is Rp40,000 per visitor. Of this amount, Rp10,000 is to be managed by the Gunungkidul district government, Rp5,000 by the BUMDes, and the remainder by each operator. Participation between the community or *pokdarwis*—often called tourism operators—and BUMDes Maju Mandiri can be characterized as contractual participation. In this mode of participation, tour operators are engaged through a contractual agreement to provide tourism services. According to Gutierrez (2023), the contractual participation model does not result in empowerment at all. Agents will typically seek to develop their social,

cultural and financial capital to gain the broadest possible access without any jointly agreed alignment. Despite the assertion that BUMDes Maju Mandiri has established standard operating procedures (SOPs) for Goa Pindul tourism services, the absence of SOP enforcement for all operators precludes the possibility of achieving genuine equality. If this practice persists, it will result in a concentration of economic power among actors with more significant financial resources, leading to a monopoly over the Goa Pindul tourism market. Furthermore, the influence of neoliberalism has permeated local communities in managing BUMDesa, promoting market freedom in pricing, capital, and growth without sufficient consideration of community equality, as expressed by Siskawati et al. (2022) in West Sumatra.

Community participation in the governance of Goa Pindul tourism is at odds with the tenet of empowerment, designed to facilitate equitable access, active engagement, and just distribution of benefits among all community members. In this context, it is essential to consider the concept of spatial planning and sectoral strategies that focus on enhancing community capacity through technological accessibility. This approach enables communities to become economic actors and exert greater control over their local resources. Consequently, the expansion of economic activities based on community social capital can be achieved if it is conducted by applicable laws and regulations and supported by empowerment efforts within the context of instrumentalized development (Badaruddin et al., 2021). Through community empowerment, tour operators gain an understanding of the management of potential local resources for tourism by introducing local products and culture (Hermawan et al., 2023; Kurniawan & Cahyono, 2020).

Empowerment Structure and Participation in Tourism Development

Since the establishment of BUMDes Maju Mandiri, the Bejiharjo village government has provided capital for five consecutive years, amounting to Rp 500 million from the Village Budget (APBDes). It should be noted that the capital is intended for something other than the development of Goa Pindul, which is the primary tourist attraction in Bejiharjo. The BUMDes management is pursuing the development of businesses in other sectors, including wedding equipment rental, retail, and community capital. The Director of BUMDes Bejiharjo believes numerous potential business opportunities for the

Bejiharjo community extend beyond the Goa Pindul tourist attraction. These illustrate the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm in the empowerment structure of BUMDes Maju Mandiri, as evidenced by the diversification of business interests, with minimal consideration for the contributions of community groups that initiated Goa Pindul tourism.

At each village deliberation meeting, whether concerning the submission of BUMDes reports or village development planning, the issue of structuring BUMDes and managing Goa Pindul invariably gives rise to debate. The community, in this case, represented by tourism operators, considers the distribution of retribution rates managed by the BUMDes to be unfair, given that it barely provides any return, except for the printing and monitoring of entrance tickets and the construction of the entrance to Goa Pindul. The community, particularly the tour operators, still expects the government to play a role in resolving the issues surrounding the organisation of Goa Pindul. They believe that the village government should be able to resolve the conflict between BUMDes Maju Mandiri and the operators. However, the village head revealed that BUMDes Maju Mandiri often operates independently, without heeding directives from the village head as the BUMDes administrator and government authority in Bejiharjo.

In this context, the village head or lurah has deficiencies in communication skills that are detrimental to effective leadership. These are evidenced by the village head's inability to articulate the issues about the facilitation of visitors to Goa Pindul and the distribution of retribution to the BUMDes Maju Mandiri. The village head demonstrates a lack of familiarity with the historical context surrounding the establishment of BUMDes and the organization of Goa Pindul tourism. Furthermore, the village head lacks knowledge of the village regulations and their authority, which were issued by the previous head of the village. This leadership communication challenge will result in disharmony between the village government and BUMDes and trigger apprenticeship in the community. Additionally, the village head's leadership's communication failure has triggered several protests from tourism operators and their members. The operators' demands are precise: transparency and accountability of the retribution managed by the BUMDes (Erlin, 2023).

The global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has severely impacted the tourism industry across all regions. These have led to

frustration among operators who believe that establishing BUMDes has not contributed to the decline in tourist visits to Goa Pindul. In response, the BUMDes issued a statement clarifying its role as the executor of the village policy. In response to the pandemic, BUMDes has provided basic food packages rather than implementing measures to revive tourism in Bejiharjo. The involvement of BUMDes in empowerment initiatives is not merely a matter of activating individuals or groups; it is also about establishing a process wherein disparate agencies wield equal authority in navigating challenging circumstances without attributing blame. In this context, the role of BUMDes and the village government, which possess greater authority than operators, should be pivotal in facilitating empowerment and inclusive development.

Mohan & Stokke (2000) posits that one of the critical challenges in decentralizing local development is the potential for shifts in leadership to precipitate changes in development priorities and the transfer of leadership knowledge. These tend to perpetuate the hegemony of pre-existing power, because such changes are part of the learning and adaptation process of power by new leaders. Leadership transitions frequently result in disparities in knowledge and comprehension. In the case of Bejiharjo, the BUMDes director demonstrated a more comprehensive understanding of the network of actors and the associated data than the village head. These illustrate that the challenge of decentralization is not merely a matter of policy; it also concerns the capacity of local structures to facilitate or impede processes of empowerment and inclusive decision-making. The discrepancy in knowledge between the BUMDes director and the village head regarding the actor map and management of Goa Pindul illustrates the necessity for a more deliberative planning process, wherein various parties can contribute equally through a local forum that accommodates the voices of the community, including those of tourism operators. A deliberative planning process involving representatives from various community groups allows them to be represented in decision-making. It can be achieved by utilising local political structures to allow operators to easily express their concerns about tourism development.

While the deliberative planning process allows for public participation, addressing environmental impacts remains a significant challenge in managing natural tourism destinations. Consequently, the concept of environmental empowerment needs to be more noticed, resulting in adverse consequences (Scheyvens & van der Watt,

2021). As an illustration, the waste generated by visitors and tourism managers, the restoration and infrastructure development that changes the environment, and the loss of habitat that inhabits Goa Pindul are examples of such issues. While waste management appears to have been implemented by BUMDes Maju Mandiri, other aspects impacting environmental sustainability, such as mitigating the risk of environmental change due to human activities and the loss of habitats that inhabit Goa Pindul, have received less attention.

It would be erroneous to assume that environmental issues represent the sole challenge facing Goa Pindul tourism management. The internal dynamics between BUMDes Maju Mandiri and tourism operators suggest that there are governance issues that still need to be fully implemented by the principles of equality and sustainability. In practice, operators' adherence to BUMDes regulations, particularly concerning compensation rates and the involvement of intermediaries, needs to be revised in policy oversight and implementation. This situation demonstrates that empowerment is not solely about environmental concerns but also about ensuring equitable socio-economic management. All operators are required to comply with the rules set by BUMDes. However, there are instances where operators do not comply, such as quoting higher retribution rates than agreed. The excess cost is believed to be used to remunerate the brokers or tour operators. Consequently, the retribution rate varies between operators.

This issue is consistently a focal point of debate during the routine operator meetings convened by BUMDes Maju Mandiri monthly. Despite its status as a perpetual point of contention, BUMDes Maju Mandiri has yet to propose a tangible solution to address the issue of operators who fail to adhere to the SOPs established by BUMDes and agreed upon. The Director of BUMDes, Maju Mandiri, asserts that this is part of community empowerment yet fails to address the issue of operators quoting higher retribution rates than those set. It also underscores the observation that BUMDes Maju Mandiri is more supportive of operators with greater financial access to advance Goa Pindul's tourism objectives, rather than defining it as empowerment.

The rhetorical device of empowerment is an effective tool for those critical of BUMDes policies. However, the efficacy of this approach is undermined when BUMDes Maju Mandiri is less active in promoting Goa Pindul's tourism attractions, with the benefits of this approach being available to all operators. The BUMDes has never

organised training or capacity building in managing tourism service businesses for all the operators it supports. Instead, it has left the operators to seek their knowledge and skills in order to empower themselves. Moreover, the BUMDes has yet to engage in efforts to promote the Goa Pindul tourist destination, assuming that if the operators are empowered, they can overcome market difficulties. Meanwhile, BUMDes only authorizes and standardizes the applicable rules, which is counterproductive given the authority BUMDes Maju Mandiri possesses, and the concept of empowerment understood by scholars specializing in tourism empowerment.

Scheyvens & van der Watt (2021) argued that empowerment is understood as activating the confidence and capabilities of previously disadvantaged or disenfranchised individuals or groups so that they can exercise greater control over their lives, challenge unequal power relations, mobilize resources to meet their needs and work towards social justice. In this case, BUMDes Maju Mandiri fails to transfer knowledge and mobilize resources to all actors equitably, with BUMDes benefiting from the existence of the actors. The empowerment structure is perceived as mutually dominating between BUMDes Maju Mandiri and operators. Widiastuti and Masyhari Makhasi (2020) found that the dominance of different concepts, values, and attitudes between the agencies (BUMDes and operators) causes conflict.

On the one hand, BUMDes disregards the practice of brokering visitors who charge higher retribution rates to visitors to increase market occupancy and more tourist visits. On the other hand, if brokering is allowed, it will harm the tourist attraction of Goa Pindul. Visitors will feel disadvantaged due to different tariffs, affecting the number of visitors for operators who do not use brokering services. In this situation, the community around the tourist attraction is at risk of losing their jobs. Although both BUMDes and operators agree that empowerment is the expansion of employment opportunities, the need for more transparency and accountability makes the concept of equal empowerment challenging to achieve. Instead of the welfare benefits enjoyed by the entire community, a portion of the profits from the management of the Goa Pindul tourist attraction will only go to the agency elite that supports it, along with the structural dualism that occurs in Bejiharjo.

Women's Participation in Tourism Development

The participation of women in developing tourist destinations in Gunungkidul needs to be

noticed. Furthermore, several studies have identified the role of women as a supplementary component to primary tourism activities. They encompass the preparation of accommodation, the provision of goods and services, the operation of souvenir shops, the cleaning of premises, the provision of toilet facilities, and the undertaking of domestic support activities at a tourist attraction (Wardhani & Susilowati, 2021). Women's groups do not assume a principal role in tourism development. Rather, they are primarily engaged in supporting roles within the context of domestic tourism (Muttaqin et al., 2023).

Consequently, the participation of women in these roles is characterized by low wages (Sujarwo et al., 2022). Furthermore, women's participation in the management of Goa Pindul is limited to core sectors such as tour guides. It is documented that only three women are employed in this capacity. Their duties include the provision of introductory information, the dissemination of safety directions, and the issuance of instructions to visitors prior to and during their exploration of Goa Pindul. The requisite qualifications include proficiency in intrapersonal communication and the ability to swim.

The participation of women in the central tourism activities of Goa Pindul has the potential to address the shortcomings and challenges faced by visitors, particularly female visitors. Evidently, some female visitors would be more at ease and find it easier to interact with female tour guides. Conversely, numerous operator representatives asserted that women's participation as tour guides is less impactful. The work is arduous, perilous, and hazardous for women, which deters them from fully actualizing their potential as tour guides. However, all operators concur that female tour guides are susceptible to harassment while carrying out their duties. Visitors continue to perceive women as sexual objects within the context of gendered tourism stereotypes (Díaz-Meneses et al., 2020). Consequently, operators are disinclined to employ women in prominent roles within the tourism industry. Alternatively, they perform ancillary roles in the tourism sector in Goa Pindul.

There is a dearth of awareness and knowledge regarding equality between women and men in the workplace, as well as an absence of designated complaint spaces for women who experience sexual harassment or violence at the hands of visitors and tour guides in Goa Pindul. It permits the continuation of gender-based disparities in the expansion of employment opportunities. In contrast to the ideal of equality between women and men, access, social norms, attitudes, and behavior within society are often

biased against women. Sörensson (2012) posited that women are perceived to have a hidden agenda as sex workers in the tourism industry, given that this industry is fundamentally concerned with leisure. Consequently, women engaged in Goa Pindul tourism are seldom included in strategic gatherings, such as arisan meetings between operators and BUMDes Maju Mandiri. Such meetings facilitate women's participation in decision-making processes aimed at optimising the potential of Bejiharjo. It is an irrefutable fact that patriarchal culture is still deeply entrenched in Indonesian society.

The masculine superiority that is generally attached to men has historically considered women to be inferior in social space. It is evident in the experiences of women in the workplace, where they are subjected to a heightened risk of violence, whether in their professional interactions with colleagues or in their interactions with visitors. This factor impedes tourism development, as it fails to establish an equal position based on individual qualifications and abilities rather than gender identity. Notably, BUMDes Maju Mandiri's organizational structure positions women as Goa Pindul's managers. This position also entails interactions with tourism operators, who are predominantly male. Rather than fulfilling a strategic role, the Goa Pindul BUMDes Maju Mandiri manager merely oversees the sale of entrance tickets to all operators rather than engaging in strategic communication with operators to ensure business continuity. This observation suggests that while women's participation in economic empowerment is inclusive, it does not necessarily translate into their participation in political empowerment.

CONCLUSION

This study originates from the context of numerous BUMDes leveraging local potential to draw tourists to destinations. Nevertheless, numerous local tourism activities currently in progress effectively appropriate community activities. This study aims to elucidate the community participation in empowerment for local tourist development conducted by BUMDes. This study indicates that community participation in empowerment is a contractual obligation whereby the terms of the agreement are legally binding. However, the actors are equally reluctant to comply with the agreed contract and appear to prefer to seek attention from the wider community rather than resolve the conflict under the terms of the agreement. Furthermore, this situation needed to be addressed by positioning it at a mutually counterproductive

intersection between the service structure, empowerment and development by the operator community, BUMDes and the village. Meanwhile, community participation is characterized by exclusivity and prioritization of the role of men in tourism management, reflecting the pervasiveness of patriarchal norms in Bejiharjo. In order to elucidate the dynamics of community participation in the management of the Goa Pindul tourist attraction, this study proposes several measures to align the power of each agency. These include:

- a. The establishment of a more equal relationship between the operator and BUMDes Maju Mandiri is mediated by the Bejiharjo village. The method is to revise village regulations regarding the establishment and change of the organizational structure of BUMDes through a more consultative and democratic process in its preparation and determination.
- b. Between agencies must convene to re-evaluate the agreed empowerment concept. Discrepancies in conceptualizing empowerment structures between actors can give rise to misinterpretations, which in turn may result in contention and conflict. It is indisputable that BUMDes Maju Mandiri was established and developed concurrently with the tourist attraction of Goa Pindul, which the operator manages. It necessitates recognition from all parties to achieve a balance of power between agencies.
- c. Given that the tourist attraction of Goa Pindul depends on the potential of natural resources and given that the ancestors of Bejiharjo demonstrated respect for the environment, the environmental and cultural empowerment structure represents a strategic effort in developing tourism in Bejiharjo.

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