

Homogeneity of Livelihoods of Bajo Tribe Fishermen: Analysis of Determinant Factors of Poverty and Local Economic Empowerment Strategies

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze and describe the problem of poverty in the homogeneous livelihoods of Bajo tribal fishermen and how to overcome it with several appropriate strategies. The type of research used was descriptive qualitative with a case study approach involving nine informants selected purposively. Based on the research results, it shows that the homogeneity of the livelihoods of Bajo ethnic fishermen is one of the determinants of sustainable poverty. In this research, several things were found as follows: 1) Bajo ethnic fishermen still follow mythological-cultural beliefs or traditions as sea people, making it difficult for them to adapt and switch jobs other than fishing even though their lives are in limited conditions; 2) Limited knowledge influences acceptance of changes or innovations to increase the productivity of marine catches; 3) Social network access is very limited and isolated in social, economic, cultural, educational and political conditions; 4) Limited relations with the local government influence development and empowerment policies to increase business and welfare according to the character of the Bajo tribe. Based on these findings, several recommendations for overcoming the poverty problem of Bajo ethnic fishermen are as follows: 1) Forming a household-based business that is in accordance with the characteristics of the type of fishing business; 2) Building micro-production facilities for processing marine products and marketing them only to regular customers or collectors who will sell them to other areas; 3) Increasing the Bajo tribe's residential area into a local or national tourist attraction; 4) Involving the community in the implementation of both formal and informal institutions; 5) Growing Community Self-Help Groups (KSM) as instruments of social change and a new paradigm; 6) There is synergy through alliances and cooperation between government agencies, business entities and Bajo tribal fishermen in increasing understanding and expertise; 7) Establishing facilities to support the operation of economic governance.

Keywords: *Poverty, Homogeneity, Fishermen, Bajo Tribe, Empowerment*

Introduction

The lives of fishermen often experience polarization which is influenced by social dynamics that occur, whether planned or not, including in the lives of fishermen from the Bajo tribe who have a homogeneous livelihood. Fishermen from the Bajo tribe have unique

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socio-cultural characteristics, but they tend to be slow in responding and adapting to changes that occur (Samah *et al.*, 2019; Shaffril *et al.*, 2017).

The "Bajo, Bajau, or Sama Bajo tribe" is one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia which is spread across various regions of the country (Nurkholis, 2018; Suryanegara *et al.*, 2015; Suyuti, 2004; Tahara, 2013). They are known as an ethnic group who work as sea nomads and are known as Sama (Bajo people), while those who are not members of their group are called Bagai. Therefore, in everyday life, Bajo people have two concepts of social interaction, namely Sama and Bagai (Rustan *et al.*, 2018; Suyuti, 2004, 2006; Tahara, 2013). From these two concepts, there is the expression "Sama dapu ma di laok" (the sea belongs to the Bajo people) which means that the sea area is only for the Bajo people, as well as the land area which is intended for people who live on land (Nurkholis, 2018; Susilowati, 2018; Suyuti, 2006). Therefore, the concepts of "Sama" and "Bagai" not only describe the symbols of "Bajo" and "Not Bajo", but are also symbols of life in the "sea" and "land" areas (Suryanegara *et al.*, 2015; Suyuti, 2006). Currently, the majority of the Bajo tribe live in the eastern region of Indonesia. They are spread in the waters of the Makassar Strait (East Coast of Kalimantan around Bontang and Laut Island), in Bone Bay (Watampone opposite Bajo-e Island), in the East Nusa Tenggara area (around Alor Island), the Banggai Islands to the east of Sulawesi, the bay Tomini (especially in Torosiaje and the Togian islands), in North Maluku (Halmahera and Bacan islands), in the waters of the Sulawesi Sea (both on the coast of North Sulawesi, East Kalimantan to East Sabah, and the Sulu Islands) (Susilowati, 2018).

In several areas of Southeast Sulawesi, the Bajo people have experienced social changes and shifts due to the influence of other cultures and management of increasingly limited marine and coastal resources (Obie, 2016; Satriani, Juhaepa, 2018; Suryanegara *et al.*, 2015; Suyuti, 2006; Tahara, 2013). Although previously they depended on marine products for their living, now Bajo people can be found working as state civil servants, academics (teachers or lecturers), motorcycle taxi drivers, members of parliament, politicians, NGO activists, and workers at tourist resorts (Suryanegara *et al.*, 2015; Tahara, 2013). Some groups have even abandoned life at sea and settled on land, even though this goes against their traditions and culture (Mukramin, 2019; Suyuti, 2006; Tahara, 2013). However, this is not an easy process, because the Bajo people have strong beliefs and culture, and tend to be isolated from outside society (Isiyana Wianti *et al.*, 2012; Susiati, 2019; Suyuti, 2004) as is currently experienced by the Bajo people in North Kolaka Regency. These changes do not always make Bajo people able to adapt and get along well with other communities, in fact they often experience discrimination and stereotypes from non-Bajo people (Susiati, 2019; Tahara, 2013).

In general, the welfare problem of the Bajo tribe lies in the long-standing poverty gap (Maemunah *et al.*, 2021; Mukramin, 2018, 2019; Susilowati, 2018; Suyuti, 2004, 2006). Even though the abundant marine resources are available, they should be able to be utilized to improve their quality of life and welfare, but in reality this is not the case. In fact, they live below the very serious poverty line. A poor lifestyle has become a major problem for the Bajo tribe in Sulaho village, North Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The disparity in poverty of the Bajo tribe in North Kolaka Regency is caused by internal and external factors (Maemunah *et al.*, 2021; Mukramin, 2018; Suyuti, 2006). Internal factors include low education (no education), uniformity of livelihood which is passed down from generation to generation, making it very difficult to change to another job (Baskara, 2014; Mukramin, 2019; Satriani, Juhaepa, 2018; Syukur, 2007). Meanwhile, external factors include access to the Bajo tribe village which is difficult because it is located between high mountains (tanjung), steep and damaged roads, local government programs that are not in accordance with the needs and culture of the Bajo tribe. Apart from these factors, there are still various other complex problems that form disparities,

such as: 1) policies and development facilities in coastal areas that have not been realized, 2) the absence of production in the fisheries sector to date which has hampered fishermen's activities, 3) limited business capital which prevents fishermen from increasing fisheries economic activities, 4) exploitation which affects fishermen's lives, and 5) lack of use and mastery of technology (technology failure).

In the context of Sama and Like interactions, the Bajo tribe experiences alienation and segregation which results in difficulties in establishing social relationships with non-Bajo individuals. This condition has been discussed by several studies (Maemunah *et al.*, 2021; Mukramin, 2019; Rustan *et al.*, 2018; Suyuti, 2006; Tahara, 2013). Therefore, this research aims to analyze and describe the poverty disparities that still exist among Bajo ethnic fishermen in North Kolaka Regency. Through this research, it is hoped that it can contribute to the formulation of appropriate policies for the authorities and overcome these problems optimally.

Methods

Very few reputable international journals discuss the stages of identifying poverty disparities in Bajo fishermen. Even though I have used Science Direct (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>) only one title about the Bajo tribe was found. The term "Sea Gypsies" used for the Bajo tribe only appears in one study. Therefore, researchers included the words "poor fishermen" in Taylor & Francis (<http://www.tandfonline.com/>), Springer (<https://link.springer.com/>), Sage Publication (<http://www.sagepub.com/home.nav>) and Emerald Publication (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/>). References found on Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>) many, but only limited to Indonesian national journals. This study is a type of descriptive qualitative research using a case study approach (Bungin, 2007; Clark, 1999; Cresswell, 2017; Dey, 2003; Fallis, 2013; Hillebrand & Berg, 2000; Lampe et al., 2020; Padgett, 2017; Sugiyono, 2018; Walliman, n.d.; Williams, 2019) This research was conducted in an in-depth and detailed manner to find out the causes of ongoing poverty among the Bajo Sulaho tribe in North Kolaka Regency which is caused by a lack of variety in livelihoods which has led to disparities in poverty from the past until now (Bungin, 2005; Cresswell, 2017; Sugiyono, 2016). Direct observations and interviews were carried out using purposive techniques based on criteria (Cresswell, 2017; Fallis, 2013; Glenwick, 2016; Hillebrand & Berg, 2000; Padgett, 2017; Pertti Alasuutari et al., 2008; VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). The informants consisted of six Bajo people, one village head, one person from the Social Service and one person from the Maritime Affairs and Empowerment Service who had knowledge about the Bajo tribe and was related to literature studies. The limited international literature on Bajo fishermen means that national literature is dominant, however there is some literature related to poor fishing communities as a comparison to the welfare problems and determinants of fishermen's poverty in other cities and countries.

Results and Discussion

Social Disparity of the Bajo Tribe

The social disparities experienced by Bajo fishermen are clearly visible in three main aspects, namely property ownership, education and employment. First, in terms of property ownership, the condition of their homes is classified as bad, so it is the basis for measuring the limited interaction between Bajo and non-Bajo people. (Susiati, 2019; Tahara, 2013). Apart from the size of their residence, they also lack vehicles, household furniture, clean water sanitation, electricity, and traditional fishing facilities that they don't even own.

Poverty in the physical aspect can be seen from the value or price and the number of facilities owned. This measure is part of social life which determines a person's social status (Gajdosikienė, 2004). Second, in terms of education, there are more uneducated Bajo fishermen parents than educated ones. Even if some are educated, they only reach elementary school, and the same thing happens to the children of Bajo fishermen. They consider that education is not important and fundamental, so many of their children do not go to school or drop out of school. Parents prefer to have their children go to sea and help them. This educational disparity has an impact on justifying ignorance, which ultimately causes poverty. Low education is the basis for disparities in the social environment (Barr, 2014; Stillwell, 2009; Syamsiah, 2016). Inequalities in education and the unequal distribution of academic resources to socially excluded communities also exacerbate this situation (Langkai et al., 2015; Stillwell, 2009). So it can be said that low education is the main cause of social disparities that have occurred for generations until now in the Bajo ethnic community (Novianti, 2017; Rustan et al., 2018). Third, in terms of profession of life, becoming a fisherman is an ancestral mandate that has been carried out from generation to generation as people of "Sama dapu ma di laok" (the sea belongs to the Bajo people). The homogeneity of their livelihood as fishermen makes it difficult for the Bajo tribe to change jobs. Pessimistic behavior towards work other than fishing keeps them in a state of poverty. This apathetic and pessimistic attitude is reflected in their difficulty in getting out of poverty and their lack of desire to try other jobs such as working as farmers or fishermen.

From the three aspects above, it can be seen that the disparity towards Bajo ethnic fishermen in the North Kolaka Regency area is a fundamental problem. Portrait of poverty (Syawie, 2011) shows that some societies live in an abundance of resources, while others live in lack, so that wealth for some individuals in a social space can mean poverty for others. Income inequality and development differences between urban, rural and coastal communities (Farida & Andalas, 2019), is the cause of inequality, so that high levels of inequality in poverty can lead to disharmony in the social order of society, such as criminal behavior (Dulkhan & Nurjanah, 2018; Lumenta *et al.*, 2009; Mardinsyah & Sukartini, 2020).

Homogeneity of Bajo Tribe Livelihood

The influence of homogeneity in people's livelihoods and incomes (Guntur *et al.*, 2019). Homogeneity itself is a social phenomenon that shows individual efforts to maintain the existence of a group by minimizing variations in life, in terms of managing systems and elements of culture, beliefs and livelihoods (Mukramin, 2019). The evolution of change and development of homogeneity in a society is influenced by low education and skills (Waris & Khasanah, 2019), as well as an attitude that is less open to change which ultimately has an impact on the welfare of society itself. On the other hand, in heterogeneous societies with high levels of livelihoods, diverse and open behavior tends to emerge compared to homogeneous societies with the same livelihoods.

The mythological-cultural history of the Bajo tribe describes the differences between land people and sea people in the form of Sama and Bagai categorizations (Rustan *et al.*, 2018; Suyuti, 2004, 2006; Tahara, 2013), Zacoot (1979) to legitimize ownership of what they call "the sea belonging to the Bajo people" (Nurkholis, 2018; Susilowati, 2018; Suyuti, 2006). This belief is part of the Bajo tribe's culture, passed down from generation to generation to maintain their identity as sea people. Even though they live in limited conditions with income that is very dependent on catches as fishermen, the Bajo tribe has managed to survive until now, even though disparities in poverty still exist among them. Although the conditions of the Bajo fishermen in North Kolaka have experienced many changes due to the social process of acculturation and assimilation (Mukramin, 2019; Suyuti, 2006), fishing remains the only livelihood and source of life for those who depend on the sea.

Table 1. Types of Livelihood

No	Livelihood	Number of Heads of Families	Percentage (%)
1	Fishermen	144	91,70
2	Breeder	5	3,2
3	Wiraswasta	5	3,2
4	Farmer	3	1,90
	Sum	157	100

Data Source: Sulaho Village Profile in 2021

Based on the data listed in the table above, there are four types of livelihoods in Sulaho village. Of these four types, the majority of Sulaho village residents, namely 144 heads of families or 19.70 percent, work as fishermen. Apart from that, there are also 5 people or 3.2 percent who work as breeders and entrepreneurs, and 3 people or 1.90 percent who work as farmers. Fishermen are the dominant livelihood in Sulaho village because the majority of the village population are native Bajo people who do not have sufficient skills or education to work in other fields. Meanwhile, the residents of Sulaho village who come from the Bugis tribe, whose numbers are very small, work as fishermen, livestock breeders and entrepreneurs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of Sulaho village residents have a livelihood as fishermen, especially the Bajo tribe who have a homogeneous livelihood. This is caused by the low level of education and skills possessed by the Bajo tribe, making it difficult for them to work in other fields apart from being fishermen.

Homogeneity as an Obstacle to Welfare

The backwardness that occurs in the Bajo ethnic group is an inevitable part of the mythology that has been passed down from generation to generation and homogeneity in livelihoods. This has a systemic impact on the social system vertically and horizontally and gives rise to prolonged social poverty, the inclusiveness of the Bajo ethnic culture which has experienced marginalization to this day. (Nababan & Situmeang, 2022). Poverty that occurs in the Bajo tribe symbolizes the inability of individuals to fulfill their basic life needs which affects their social conditions, including the physical conditions of residence, low education and poor health, as well as limitations in social interaction both horizontally and vertically. A number of factors and situations have caused the economic decline of fishing communities (Imron, 2003). The income of fishermen from the Bajo tribe in North Kolaka Regency is very small, their work is very dependent on natural conditions. Sometimes fishermen cannot fish in the sea because of the season and climate (Imron, 2003). In the western season, fishermen can fish because the climate is favorable, but on the other hand, in the eastern season (famine) fishermen cannot fish. Therefore, the uncertainty of seasons and climate is a problem for coastal communities whose livelihoods depend on fishing (Kusumaningrum, 2013).

Based on the data obtained, it shows that the Bajo tribe deliberately chose to work as fishermen even though they face various limitations in meeting basic needs such as clothing, food and shelter. However, their awareness does not make them change professions because going to sea is an ancestral heritage that must be maintained and carried out at all times. Apart from that, most of the Bajo people in Solaho still hope to get assistance from the government to cover the lack of income from marine products and their basic needs, so they are very dependent on this assistance so that they can continue fishing without abandoning their traditions. Even though they have received direction and input from various sectors such as the District Social Welfare Worker Coordinator and the Social Welfare Service, they remain consistent with their work and no one wants to switch or change professions. They prefer to rely on their life principles, namely going to sea as an ancestral heritage that must be maintained. Their limited knowledge about innovative fishing facilities means they can only generate enough profits to meet their daily needs. In

addition, the lack of knowledge means they can only use traditional tools and rent ships to go to sea. The reason they choose to work as fishermen is because it is the only job they have and it is easy to do.

Income and Expenditures of the Bajo Tribe

The Bajo tribe who work as fishermen earn income and costs they have to pay every month, including costs for family needs and routine operations as fishermen. Detailed information can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. Fishermen's Monthly Income and Expenditure

No.	Description	Sum
A	Fisherman's Income	
1.	Big Fisherman	US\$.173
2.	Small Fisherman	US\$.100
B	Fisherman Production	
1.	Large Fishermen Operational Costs	US\$.105
2.	Small Fishermen Operational Costs	US\$.80
3.	Family Consumption Costs	US\$.80

Data Source: Primary Data Processing in 2021

According to the table above, it shows that Bajo fishermen in Sulaho village have low incomes, with an average monthly income below the Regency/City Minimum Wage, namely US\$ 180, so they are classified as living below the poverty line. The income earned is highly volatile, with catches sometimes producing a profit, but often nothing. Fishermen usually get a catch of around US\$.33, and sometimes it drops to US\$.13 each time they go to sea. They usually go to sea for a week and then return to land for three days to a week to sell their catch and meet their families. After that, they go back to sea, and this becomes a routine if the weather is good. Their operational expenses while at sea include 10-kilogram rice at a price of US\$.8, snacks around US\$.2, 1 slop (10 packs) of cigarettes around US\$.15-16, drinks (coffee/tea and sugar) around US\$.3-6, 50-100 liters of diesel at a price of US\$.21-43, and additional maintenance costs if any part of the engine or fishing equipment is damaged. Their average expenditure was US\$.66 more per trip. The expenditure and results obtained are so disproportionate that many of them are forced to take on debts and depend on patrons and clients.

Based on the monthly income they receive, Bajo tribal people who are fishermen are divided into two groups, namely small fishermen with an income of around US\$ 100 and large fishermen with an income of around US\$ 173. The income earned is proportional to expenses, sometimes even greater than expenses. Usually the difference between small fishermen and large fishermen is caused by limited fishing equipment and boats used to support fishing activities. Apart from that, they only rely on traditional knowledge passed down from generation to generation without being supported by adequate modern fishing equipment to increase the productivity of marine catches. Surviving as fishermen and having a homogeneous livelihood greatly influences the level of income earned by the Bajo tribe. It is difficult to leave work as a fisherman because of cultural mythological traditions, so the Bajo people will experience difficulties if they have to work outside the fishing profession. Occupation as farmer and fisherman (Anggi Rantau P, 2018; Imron, 2003). Cannot be separated from the problem of poverty. This professional group has the same economic problems, but according to Santiasih (1993), fishermen are the poorest group of people (Imron, 2003).

Alleviation of Poverty Disparity of the Bajo Tribe

The concept of empowerment has an important meaning in social justice and human rights strategies. There are two concepts that must be considered, namely empowerment and

marginalized groups (Jim & Tesoriero, 2008). In the context of community development, empowerment is always associated with independence, participation, networks and justice. The basic concept of empowerment is individual strength and community level. Community empowerment based on local wisdom with participation from the community itself so that local communities can be involved in the process of independence and empowerment (Cahyaningrum, 2018). The spread of development and empowerment in each region to overcome existing problems, generally stems from the internal deficiencies of the community itself, both in terms of human resources and natural resources (Umar & Syarif, 2019). The problem of poverty that still exists in the Bajo tribe is an issue that the government has not yet managed to fully overcome.

The reality of life for the Bajo tribe in North Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia is marked by economic inequality which has an impact on employment uniformity. Therefore, the use of local resources as a basis for empowerment is a contextual participatory system and allows local communities to play an active role in improving their business and welfare independently according to their social characteristics. This is in line with empowerment theory which emphasizes the importance of the education or learning process to equip people to improve their abilities so that they have ideas, understanding, vocabulary and skills that are effective and sustainable in working towards change (Agus, 2015). Furthermore, it cannot be denied the important role of communication and interaction networks in terms of innovation and its spread (Ariestya, 2019). Stroz in (Sudarsana, 2020) explains that the social environment includes "all conditions that in some way influence individual behavior, including growth, development, and life processes, which can also be considered as environmental preparation for the next generation". Therefore, empowerment based on local wisdom is an activity that provides the greatest opportunity for the community to develop according to the potential of the social environment and livelihoods, especially to overcome poverty in rural areas with homogeneous livelihoods such as the Bajo tribal community in North Kolaka (Rahmi *et al.*, 2022).

Environmental adaptation is the ability of society to adapt to its environment in order to survive. This adjustment can be achieved through the development and restructuring of local resources in the micro, small and medium enterprise sectors. Empowering Bajo tribal residential areas through the application of local wisdom in environmental management can develop villages as potential for ecotourism and production space for micro processing of seafood and household businesses. The government is also expected to be able to overcome the problem of poverty in society (Agus Nurkholiq, 2022). Able to develop conceptual and practical models and strategies to overcome fishermen poverty, with a focus on developing work productivity and business skills outside the fishing profession. Especially in improving the welfare of the Bajo tribe, empowerment is needed which includes openness to fishing gear innovation, expansion and marketing strategies for fishermen's catches. Furthermore, this input can be used to create policies related to alleviating poverty of fishermen, especially the Bajo tribe (Agus Nurkholiq, 2022). To achieve this goal, it is necessary to develop outreach and operate facilities for the Bajo ethnic community. This includes selecting methods and tools as well as strengthening the functions of various institutions that can carry out community empowerment activities. This activity includes preserving and developing local community-based tourism businesses, establishing coastal community forums in an integrated and sustainable manner with stakeholders. In this way, the welfare of local communities can increase.

Conclusion

Based on findings in the field, the poverty disparities that continue from the past to the present are caused by several factors. First, Bajo fishermen are still tied to mythological-

cultural beliefs and traditions as sea people, which makes it difficult for them to adapt and change jobs other than as fishermen. This is caused by the concept of Same and Like interaction which is inherent in their lives. Second, limited knowledge also influences the difficulty of accepting changes or innovations for livelihood tools and facilities that can increase the productivity of marine catches. Third, access to social networks is very limited or even non-existent, making them isolated in social, economic, cultural, educational and political conditions. Finally, limited relations with the local government also influence development and empowerment policies that can increase business and prosperity in accordance with the character of the Bajo tribe.

It is hoped that by empowering the Bajo tribe, poverty disparities can be overcome by maintaining the homogeneity of livelihoods. Several strategic models that can be formulated are as follows: 1) Forming a family-based business with a fishing type business in Bajo tribal settlements that uses marine raw materials such as dried fish, shrimp and sea cucumbers, as well as restaurants whose raw materials come from within the residential area. . Apart from that, businesses made from non-sea products such as selling basic necessities, making cakes and drinks whose raw materials come from outside residential areas can also be carried out; 2) Providing facilities and production space for micro processing of marine products and only sold to regular customers or collectors who will sell to other areas. This can make the Bajo tribal residential area a marine product processing center that is better known to the public; 3) Preserving the Bajo tribe's residential area as a local or national tourist attraction and arranging a seafood processing place so that it becomes a center for selling souvenirs typical of the Bajo tribe; 4) Involve the community in the implementation of existing institutions (both formal and informal) as initiators who initiate/coordinate the results of village planning so that they can increase public awareness through suggestions and regular discussions; 5) Forming Community Self-Help Groups (KSM) which aims to alleviate poverty disparities and act as an instrument of social change, paradigm change, getting used to the practice of new values, new perspectives and their institutionalization in everyday life; 6) Developing synergy through partnerships and collaboration between government agencies, private companies and Bajo tribal fishing communities to increase knowledge and skills in building sustainable villages (both formal and non-formal) as well as increasing thinking productivity, creativity, innovation and adaptation; 7) Building infrastructure as a supporting means to strengthen social and economic systems in daily life and increasing the involvement of the political economy, institutions and social networks of society in implementing good governance in government.

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