Community Governance for Coastal Empowerment in Bintan Regency: Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi community governance dalam konteks kebijakan pemberdayaan masyarakat pesisir di Kabupaten Bintan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa community governance memainkan peran sentral dalam kebijakan pemberdayaan, yang ditandai dengan partisipasi aktif masyarakat dalam pengambilan keputusan serta pelaksanaan program-program pemberdayaan. Namun, penelitian ini juga menemukan beberapa tantangan, seperti konflik kepentingan di antara pemangku kepentingan, keterlibatan sektor swasta yang masih terbatas, dan kurangnya pemahaman akan pentingnya peran masyarakat dalam proses pemberdayaan. Untuk mengatasi masalah ini, diperlukan sinergi antara pemerintah, masyarakat, dan sektor swasta guna menciptakan lingkungan yang kondusif bagi community governance yang efektif dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti pentingnya peran lembaga sosial, seperti LSM, lembaga adat, dan lembaga keagamaan, dalam memperkuat partisipasi masyarakat. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat meningkatkan pemahaman tentang pentingnya community governance dalam kebijakan pemberdayaan masyarakat pesisir serta memberikan rekomendasi kebijakan untuk meningkatkan efektivitasnya di Kabupaten Bintan.

ABSTRACT

This study explores community governance within the context of coastal community empowerment policies in Bintan Regency. The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and participatory observation to collect data. The findings indicate that community governance plays a central role in the empowerment policies, characterized by active community participation in decision-making and the implementation of empowerment programs. However, the study also identifies challenges, such as conflicts of interest among stakeholders, limited private sector involvement, and insufficient understanding of community roles in the empowerment process. To address these issues, collaboration between the government, community, and private sector is crucial to foster an environment conducive to sustainable and effective community governance. The research further emphasizes the importance of social institutions, such as non-governmental organizations, traditional institutions, and religious organizations, in strengthening community participation. The findings aim to enhance the understanding of community governance's significance in coastal community empowerment policies and provide policy recommendations to improve its effectiveness in Bintan Regency.

INTRODUCTION

The background of community governance typically highlights the collaborative efforts among multiple stakeholders to address common issues within a community (Iswanto et al., 2024). This governance model relies heavily on consensus and partnership between key players such as local government, private sectors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the community itself. It is often supported by formal documents or agreements that outline shared

responsibilities and goals. In the case of coastal community empowerment, as studied in Bintan Regency, this governance model involves participatory decision-making, where community members actively engage in managing natural resources and implementing sustainable development programs. However, despite these efforts, various challenges such as limited private sector involvement and conflicts of interest hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives, calling for stronger multi-sectoral collaboration to create a conducive environment for effective governance.

Coastal community empowerment in Indonesia has been a vital agenda in efforts to enhance the welfare and independence of coastal populations (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022). Given Indonesia's extensive coastline, these communities are an integral part of the country's demographics and economy (Nagaoka, 2011; Sutawa, 2012). Their livelihood heavily relies on marine resources, making sustainable management and empowerment crucial for their long-term well-being. Over the years, various government initiatives have sought to uplift coastal communities by enhancing access to education, healthcare, and sustainable economic development opportunities. Despite significant efforts, many challenges persist in ensuring the equitable and effective distribution of resources and opportunities, especially in remote coastal areas (Herlinda et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2022).

One of the key approaches to coastal community empowerment has been through the development of community governance. This framework emphasizes the active involvement of community members in decision-making processes, especially in managing natural resources and implementing development programs (Agam et al., 2021; Jurowski et al., 2011). In the coastal regions of Bintan Regency, community governance has emerged as a fundamental pillar in empowering local populations. However, its implementation faces numerous hurdles, such as conflicts of interest among stakeholders, limited involvement of private sectors, and a lack of understanding of the importance of the community's role in these processes (Robinson et al., 2014).

The focus of this study is to examine how community governance plays a role in the empowerment of coastal communities in Bintan Regency. While community involvement in decision-making and program implementation is seen as essential, the actual level of participation varies widely across regions (Clarke & Stewart, 1994; O'Toole & Burdess, 2004). In some areas, active community participation has led to sustainable development initiatives, while in others, the process has been hindered by organizational and structural challenges. The study seeks to explore the varying outcomes of community governance across different coastal villages within Bintan.

The formulation of this research is driven by several critical questions: What role does community governance play in the empowerment of coastal communities in Bintan Regency? What are the impacts of implementing community governance on the development and empowerment of these communities? Additionally, what challenges and barriers exist in promoting effective community governance in this context? Addressing these questions will provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current governance frameworks and suggest possible improvements for future policies.

The objectives of this research are to explore and analyze the role of community governance in enhancing the empowerment of coastal communities. Additionally, the study aims to assess the impact of community governance on the decision-making processes related to the sustainable management of natural resources. Furthermore, the research seeks to identify the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of community governance in these coastal areas. By

providing a comprehensive analysis, the study aims to contribute to the development of more effective governance strategies for the region.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to offer recommendations for improving community governance structures in coastal areas. By understanding the role of local governance in empowering communities, policymakers can design better programs that ensure more equitable resource distribution and stronger community involvement in decision-making processes. This could ultimately lead to improved economic and social outcomes for coastal populations, particularly in underdeveloped and marginalized regions.

Finally, the study is expected to contribute to the broader understanding of community governance as a tool for sustainable development. Through its focus on coastal areas, this research highlights the unique challenges and opportunities in these regions, offering valuable lessons for other similar contexts. The findings could be used to develop more robust governance frameworks that are adaptable to the specific needs and conditions of coastal communities across Indonesia and beyond.

Literature Review

The current research lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework for community governance that can serve as a foundation for this study. The term "community governance" is often mentioned, but its definition and application within the context of coastal community empowerment remain vague. A detailed theoretical basis is essential to distinguish how governance operates at various community levels, especially when aiming to empower coastal populations. Without such a framework, it becomes difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of governance structures or to propose improvements that are grounded in sound theory. The research should establish a clear conception of community governance by integrating relevant theories from public administration, community development, and stakeholder participation, particularly in the context of coastal areas, where environmental and socio-economic challenges are distinct.

Additionally, the research has not sufficiently addressed the gap in existing studies nor highlighted the novelty of its contribution. Although coastal community empowerment is a significant focus, the paper does not clearly articulate how its findings offer new insights compared to previous research. For instance, the study mentions challenges like conflicts of interest among stakeholders and limited private sector involvement, which are not new issues in governance literature (Alfiandri & Irawan, 2023). A more robust presentation of the research gap and the unique aspects of community governance in coastal areas is necessary to underscore the value of the study (Ismanto et al., 2023). Specifically, focusing on how this research advances understanding in underexplored areas, such as the specific dynamics of governance in small-scale coastal communities, would strengthen the argument for its originality.

Several studies emphasize the crucial role of active community participation in improving the effectiveness of coastal community empowerment programs. (Wijayanti & Suryani, 2015) found that active public involvement in decision-making processes significantly boosts the success of coastal management and empowerment initiatives. This suggests that for sustainable empowerment, coastal communities must have a platform to voice their concerns and contribute to policy formation (Akbar et al., 2020). The participation levels, however, are often influenced by both internal factors such as local leadership and external factors such as government support.

(Kearney et al., 2007) conducted an insightful analysis showing a direct correlation between the sustainability of coastal community empowerment programs and external support from government bodies and international donors. The study highlighted those external interventions, particularly in the form of financial aid, infrastructure development, and capacity-building efforts, play a pivotal role in sustaining the progress of these empowerment programs. However, the study also identified a significant gap in addressing cultural and social factors, which often remain overlooked but are essential to ensuring the long-term success of empowerment initiatives.

According to several other studies, implementing coastal community empowerment programs faces significant hurdles, such as limited human resource capacities, insufficient funding, and poor management of resources. Research by (Ojha et al., 2016)illustrated that these challenges are more prominent in rural or less-developed coastal regions, where education and infrastructure are inadequate. Moreover (Tijan et al., 2021)noted that the lack of proper coordination among government entities, non-government organizations, and local communities further hampers the success of such programs. These studies collectively call for improved collaboration and resource management strategies to mitigate such issues.

Several researchers, including (Sihombing, 2021) have focused on the importance of economic diversification in empowering coastal communities. Their studies advocate for incorporating tourism, agriculture, and crafts alongside traditional fishing activities to increase income sources and mitigate the risks of resource depletion. This multifaceted approach not only helps communities reduce their dependency on fisheries but also enhances economic resilience against environmental and economic shocks.

Lastly, environmental sustainability is a recurring theme in coastal community empowerment literature. Studies have consistently highlighted the need for sustainable practices in managing marine and coastal resources. This is evident in the works of (Camagni, 2004) who underscored the role of environmental education and participatory governance in fostering sustainable use of resources. These initiatives not only empower communities economically but also ensure the long-term viability of the ecosystems on which they rely.

This study introduces a novel approach by focusing on the specific dynamics of community governance in the context of coastal empowerment policies in Bintan Regency. Unlike previous research, which often overlooks the intricate interactions between local communities, government, and private sectors, this study provides a comprehensive analysis that incorporates social, cultural, and economic factors. The research contributes significantly by offering practical policy recommendations based on a triangulated understanding of these interrelations.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method to explore community governance within the framework of coastal community empowerment policies in Bintan Regency. The data collection techniques include in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and participatory observation in various coastal villages. The interviews targeted local government officials, community leaders, and members of community-based organizations involved in the empowerment process. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling, allowing the researchers to select informants who have specific knowledge or experience regarding the governance and empowerment activities within coastal communities (Bungin, 2015; Sugiyono, 2016).

For data analysis, the thematic analysis approach was utilized to identify recurring themes from the interview transcripts and observation notes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method involves coding the data into categories that reflect patterns or significant issues raised by the informants. The study also employed triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings by comparing data from multiple sources, such as documents, interview transcripts, and field notes. Additionally, a word cloud analysis was conducted to visualize the frequency of key terms mentioned during the interviews, further supporting thematic analysis (Phillips & Lu, 2018).

In terms of statistical analysis, the study also incorporated correlation tests to explore relationships between the levels of community participation in decision-making and the effectiveness of empowerment programs. The Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to determine the strength of the relationship between these variables. This test was crucial in identifying whether higher participation rates were associated with more successful outcomes in community-based governance and resource management initiatives. Lastly, the use of scientific formulas in analyzing data was limited to examining socio-economic variables, where linear regression analysis was employed to predict the potential impact of various factors such as local governance policies and economic development initiatives on community welfare. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within community governance and the coastal empowerment policies implemented in Bintan Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Wordcloud Analysis of Community Governance Based on Informant Interview Transcripts

Word cloud analysis is a technique used to visually represent the frequency and prominence of terms within textual data, often in the form of interviews, surveys, or other qualitative content. In this study, word cloud analysis was employed to explore the key themes emerging from community governance discussions in Bintan Regency's coastal villages. This visual method provides a quick way to identify recurring topics and priorities among stakeholders, such as "participation," "government support," or "resource management." The importance of this method lies in its ability to highlight not only dominant issues but also subtler patterns that might be missed in traditional analysis. Word cloud analysis is especially useful in research like this, where the complexity of community dynamics and governance requires a clear and concise interpretation of qualitative data.

In the research methodology, after conducting interviews with key stakeholders and participatory observations in coastal villages, the study followed a multi-step approach. First, qualitative data from interviews and field notes were coded thematically. The word cloud analysis was then used to identify the frequency of key terms, visually highlighting critical concepts in community governance. Alongside, triangulation was applied to validate findings across multiple data sources. The urgency of using word cloud analysis in this research is apparent, as it helps in quickly identifying key governance elements and challenges—such as stakeholder collaboration, leadership roles, and external support mechanisms—allowing for a deeper understanding of community empowerment efforts in the context of coastal resource management.

1. **Village Pengujan**: The wordcloud analysis for Village Pengujan revealed significant keywords that highlight the key themes in community governance. Notably, the word "group" appears 56 times, emphasizing the importance of collective action in the community's social structure. This demonstrates the reliance on group-based activities for community decision-making, such as fishing groups or entrepreneurial groups. Other

key terms like "village", "community", and "fishermen" underscore the primary focus of livelihoods and governance in this coastal village. The frequent use of terms such as "meeting" and "assistance" reflects both the participatory nature of governance and the reliance on external aid for sustaining initiatives. Overall, the wordcloud reveals a strong communal identity focused on collective work, resource management, and external support mechanisms.

2. **Village Teluk Bakau:** The term "cooperation" was notably prominent, highlighting the emphasis on collaboration among different community stakeholders. This aligns with the village's efforts in fostering tourism as a key economic driver. The community's dependence on tourism-related governance is reflected in words like "tourism", "group", and "planning", showcasing the structured approach taken to align local efforts with broader economic goals. Meetings and participation of external actors also play a crucial role here, as seen in frequent references to "discussions" and "government assistance". The wordcloud suggests a community governance model where collective action and planning for tourism have become the central focus.

3. **Village Busung:** The wordcloud analysis of Village Busung underscores the relevance of resource management in the governance structure. Key terms such as "water management", "land", and "agriculture" appear frequently, indicating that much of the governance revolves around sustainable management of natural resources. Additionally, "development projects" and "government programs" show the active role of public policies in shaping local governance. The emphasis on "community involvement" suggests that initiatives are driven by participatory decision-making processes, a hallmark of effective community governance in rural areas.

4. **Village Tembeling**: Governance efforts are directed heavily toward environmental sustainability and traditional leadership. Words like "environment", "forest", and "sustainable use" appeared frequently in the analysis, reflecting the village's strong focus on preserving natural resources. Additionally, there is significant mention of "local leadership" and "tradition", which indicate a community governance structure deeply rooted in customary practices and local wisdom. The village's engagement with external bodies is also highlighted, as seen in terms like "NGO" and "government collaboration".

5. **Village Pengudang**: The wordcloud highlights economic resilience and community innovation as central themes. Keywords such as "small business", "entrepreneurship", and "innovation" reflect the village's active pursuit of alternative income sources beyond traditional fishing. Governance in Village Pengudang seems to focus on fostering entrepreneurial groups and innovative strategies for economic development. The frequent occurrence of "training" and "capacity building" underscores efforts to equip the community with skills necessary for sustainable economic growth.

6. **Village Berakit:** wordcloud emphasizes collaborative governance and marine resource management. Words such as "collaboration", "marine resources", and "participation" are prominent, indicating the community's focus on managing coastal and marine ecosystems. The presence of terms like "fishermen cooperatives" and "marine protection zones" demonstrates the role of governance in ensuring the sustainable use of marine resources while fostering economic opportunities through fishing.

The wordcloud analysis across these villages showcases the varied but interconnected facets of community governance, which is fundamentally based on collective action, resource management, and external support. In each village, community governance is shaped by local economic activities (such as fishing or tourism), environmental concerns, and the capacity to organize collective efforts. A common theme across all villages is the emphasis on group participation. Whether through formal organizations like fishermen's groups or informal

gatherings, the wordcloud highlights the importance of collective decision-making in maintaining community cohesion. This is a vital aspect of community governance, as it allows for shared responsibilities and greater participation in public life, ensuring that decisions reflect the needs and values of the community.

Village Busung and Village Berakit underscore the importance of sustainable resource management. The frequent appearance of terms related to land, water, and marine resources indicates that the governance structures in these communities are closely tied to natural resource use. This is particularly relevant in coastal and rural areas where livelihoods depend directly on the management of environmental resources. Community governance, therefore, serves not only as a social mechanism but also as an environmental stewardship model. Terms like "assistance", "training", and "government programs" reveal the reliance on external support for community development. Villages like Village Pengujan and Village Teluk Bakau show that external partnerships, whether with governmental bodies or NGOs, are integral to the success of community governance initiatives. These collaborations help bring resources, knowledge, and financial aid that the communities might otherwise lack. However, the key to sustainable governance seems to lie in balancing external inputs with locally-driven initiatives, ensuring that governance structures remain resilient and adaptable.

The balance between economic development and environmental sustainability is a recurring theme in villages like Village Pengudang and Village Tembeling. These villages are actively engaging in economic diversification, but governance mechanisms ensure that this growth is environmentally sustainable. The presence of terms like "training" and "capacity building" suggests a governance focus on equipping the community to handle both economic pressures and environmental challenges effectively. In conclusion, wordcloud analysis provides a visual representation of the central themes within the transcripts, helping to identify key areas of focus in community governance across the Bintan region. The strong emphasis on collective action, resource management, and external partnerships reveals a governance structure that, while reliant on external support, is firmly rooted in local needs and environmental realities. This highlights the crucial role that participatory governance plays in maintaining community well-being and resilience in rural and coastal regions.

Triangulation analysis of community governance in the coastal areas of Bintan Regency

The findings from interviews in Pengujan Village revealed that the Pokdarwis group (Tourism Awareness Group), led by Mr. Marzuki, faces challenges in maintaining active participation. Despite having an established organizational structure, the pandemic led to a halt in activities. The difficulty in reactivating the group highlights a broader issue in community governance: sustaining active participation, especially after disruptions. This issue also extends to the fishermen's group, where Mr. Amir reported that community engagement remains low, despite the group's economic benefits. These findings underscore a recurring challenge in community governance — keeping community members motivated and involved in the decision-making processes that shape local governance.

Another recurring challenge is the lack of skilled human resources. Both the Pokdarwis and fishermen's groups suffer from organizational weaknesses due to insufficient management skills. The village head, Mr. Zulfitri, pointed out that while there are efforts to improve these structures, limited managerial skills continue to obstruct the implementation of programs. As seen across various groups, the lack of training and skill development poses significant barriers to successful community governance . To address this, ongoing capacity building initiatives are needed, particularly focused on leadership and organizational management.

Financial limitations are a common barrier for community groups in Bintan. According to Mrs. Rosmawar, the head of KUBE (Joint Business Group), obtaining sufficient funding has been a consistent issue. Despite their contribution to local economic empowerment, particularly among women, these groups lack access to the necessary financial support from the village administration. Without proper funding, many initiatives remain underdeveloped, limiting their impact. This underlines the need for sustainable financial mechanisms to support long-term community-driven projects.

Management difficulties are also evident in various community organizations. For instance, both the Pokdarwis and the local village enterprises (BUMDes) struggle with internal management, which has hindered program execution. Weaknesses in organizational structures often result in inefficiencies, leading to unmet program goals. Furthermore, the fishermen's group faces additional hurdles related to the marketing and distribution of their catch, illustrating that economic success also depends on effective resource management. Thus, improving governance requires not just financial support but also enhanced management capacities across all groups.

The village government plays a crucial role in supporting community governance. Interviews in Teluk Bakau village revealed that, while the local government provides budgetary and infrastructural support, this is often insufficient to meet the growing needs of the community. Mr. Abdul Wahid, the village head, emphasized that despite these efforts, more comprehensive funding and consistent involvement from higher government levels are necessary to ensure the sustainability of community initiatives. This finding suggests that effective community governance requires multi-level collaboration between village leaders, community members, and external stakeholders.

To improve the effectiveness of community governance in coastal villages like Pengujan and Teluk Bakau, several key areas need attention. First, enhancing community participation through targeted engagement strategies is crucial. Efforts should also focus on building managerial capacities within local organizations to enable better program implementation. Additionally, securing long-term financial support and fostering stronger partnerships with government bodies and private sectors could help overcome existing challenges.

Figure 1.
Mindmap Diagram Community Governance in Coastal Areas of Bintan Regency
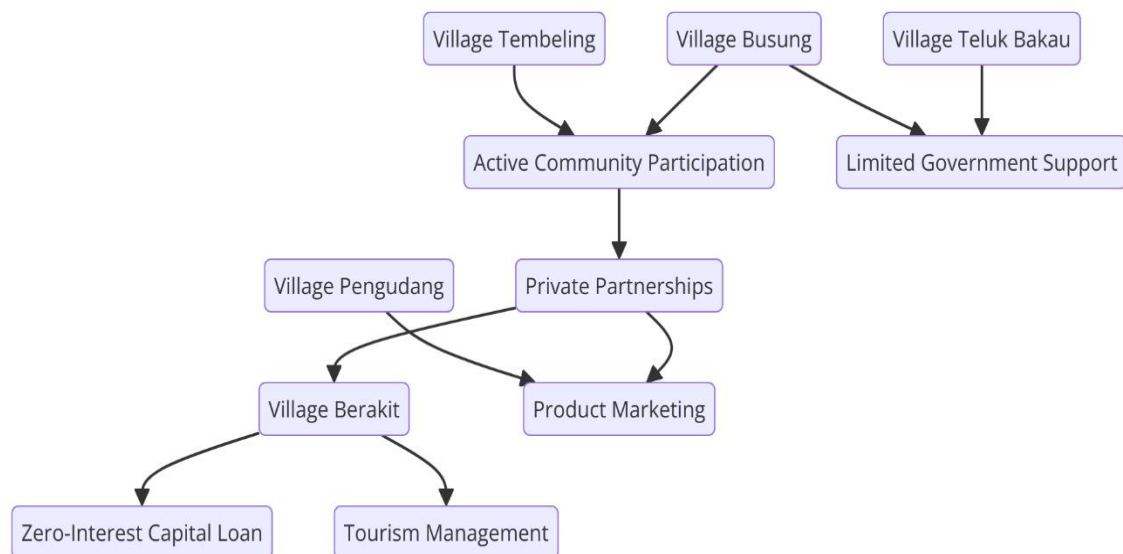

Source: Nvivo, 2024

Flowchart Community Governance in Coastal Areas of Bintan Regency

The visualization of the research framework on "Community Governance in the Coastal Community Empowerment Policy in Bintan Regency." This visualization illustrates the relationship between the main challenges faced and the unique insights from each village that has been analyzed. The visualization helps to understand how various factors such as active participation, human resource limitations, funding, management, and collaboration influence the effectiveness of community empowerment programs in these villages.

The diagram above illustrates the intricate relationships between various villages and key factors affecting their development, such as government support, community participation, and private sector partnerships. Central to this network is the concept of Active Community Participation, which plays a pivotal role in connecting several villages. For instance, Village Tembeling and Village Busung both rely on active community involvement to foster growth and partnerships with external stakeholders. A major challenge highlighted is the Limited Government Support, which affects villages like Village Teluk Bakau and Village Busung. This lack of sufficient backing from the government creates a need for alternative forms of support, such as private partnerships, which are essential in bridging the gap between limited resources and community needs.

Figure 2.
Village Network Relationships

Source: Nvivo, 2024

Furthermore, Village Berakit stands out with its access to a Zero-Interest Capital Loan and an emphasis on Tourism Management. These initiatives help foster sustainable economic development, particularly in the tourism sector. Meanwhile, Village Pengudang focuses on Product Marketing, likely as a means of boosting local economic activities and ensuring that village products reach a wider audience. The connection between private sector involvement and the villages is evident in the relationships fostered through Private Partnerships, which support both Product Marketing and broader economic activities. This network highlights how interconnected efforts among the villages, the community, government, and private sectors are essential for driving sustainable development across the region. Despite challenges such as limited government support, villages are actively seeking alternative solutions through community engagement and external partnerships.

Challenges and Strategies Community Governance in Coastal Areas of Bintan Regency

Community governance faces various Challenges and Strategies that affect the effectiveness of empowerment programs in coastal communities. One of the main challenges is the lack of active participation from community members. Many programs do not run well because the community is not actively involved in planning and implementing activities. This is often due to the busyness of daily work or a lack of awareness of the importance of participation in community activities. Below is a table explaining the challenges and obstacles in each village in Bintan Regency. The Challenges and Strategies in community governance in the coastal areas of Bintan Regency reflect various issues that affect the effectiveness of community empowerment programs.

The lack of active community participation is a major challenge in almost all villages, driven by the daily work routine and lack of awareness about the importance of participation. Additionally, the limited skilled human resources, inadequate funding, and difficulties in program management and administration also hinder the implementation of programs in various villages. Although each village faces specific challenges, common issues such as limited funding, lack of group member commitment, and difficulties in marketing local products and managing tourism are significant obstacles. Collaborative efforts and increased community awareness are necessary to overcome these barriers and improve the success of empowerment programs in the coastal areas of Bintan.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the data in this study, it can be concluded that community governance plays a crucial role in the success of coastal community empowerment programs in Bintan Regency. Active involvement of the community in decision-making processes and program implementation is key to the success in several villages. However, the primary challenge faced is the lack of community participation, driven by daily work commitments and limited awareness of the importance of active roles. Additionally, the scarcity of skilled human resources and inadequate funding have hindered the effective implementation of empowerment programs.

The correlation analysis between community participation and program effectiveness indicates that villages with higher participation levels tend to have more successful and sustainable programs. In contrast, villages facing internal management issues and resource limitations often struggle to achieve optimal outcomes. Other obstacles identified in this study include difficulties in marketing local products, insufficient support from the private sector, and a lack of collaboration between the government, community, and private stakeholders. To enhance the effectiveness of community governance in coastal areas, measures that encourage more active community participation, improve human resource capacity, and ensure sustainable funding support are required. Collaboration between the government, private sector, and community is essential to create more inclusive and effective community governance, thereby increasing the success of empowerment programs in coastal villages in Bintan Regency.

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