



Community Participation in Local Governance and Its Impact on Social Welfare Development in Coastal Communities of Bulukumba Regency

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Article Info

Article History:

Received 12 September 2020

Revised 26 October 2020

Accepted: 17 December 2020

Keywords:

Community Participation,
Local Governance, Social
Welfare Development.

Abstract

Community participation has increasingly been recognized as a fundamental element of effective local governance and sustainable social welfare development. This study examines the forms of community participation in local governance and its impact on social welfare development in the coastal communities of Bulukumba Regency, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores how local residents engage in governance processes and how such participation contributes to improving social welfare outcomes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving village officials, community leaders, fishermen, women's groups, youth representatives, and other relevant stakeholders. The findings reveal that community participation occurs through various mechanisms, including involvement in development planning, implementation of community programs, monitoring and evaluation activities, and participation in local organizations. The study identifies several factors that support participation, such as inclusive leadership, strong social capital, transparency, effective communication, and active community institutions. However, participation is constrained by limited educational capacity, economic pressures, unequal access to information, and the influence of local elites. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that community participation positively contributes to social welfare development by improving economic opportunities, enhancing access to public services, strengthening social cohesion, increasing community empowerment, and fostering trust in local government institutions. The study also highlights the reciprocal relationship between participation and welfare, where improved welfare conditions encourage greater civic engagement. Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature on participatory governance by emphasizing the role of social capital in strengthening local governance processes in coastal communities. Practically, the findings suggest that strengthening participatory mechanisms is essential for achieving inclusive, responsive, and sustainable social welfare development in coastal regions.

Introduction

Social welfare development is one of the primary goals of sustainable development, a focus for many countries worldwide. Social welfare is not only understood as increasing people's economic income, but also encompasses the fulfillment of basic needs, access to education and healthcare, social protection, community empowerment, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Sen, 2017). In the modern development paradigm, social welfare is no longer viewed solely as the result of government policies, but rather as a product of interactions between the government, communities, and various other stakeholders involved in development governance (Mitchell et al., 2016).

The development of the concept of governance has shifted the development approach from a centralized model to a more participatory and collaborative model (Clarke, 2017). Good governance positions communities as key actors in the development process through active involvement in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies (Maloba, 2015). In this context, community participation is a fundamental principle determining the success of development because it enables policies to be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of local communities (Ashari, 2015).

The literature on participatory development shows that community involvement in local governance significantly contributes to increasing the effectiveness of public policies and developing social welfare (Iskandar, 2017). According to Marzuki (2015), community participation reflects the level of power distribution that allows citizens to influence the decision-making process. The higher the level of community participation, the greater the opportunity for creating inclusive and equitable policies. Furthermore, community participation also serves as a social oversight mechanism that can increase government transparency and accountability (Seetharam Sridhar et al., 2019).

Various studies have shown that community participation in local governance contributes to improving the quality of public services, reducing poverty, strengthening social capital, and developing the local economy (Gemiharto & Rosfiantika, 2017). Communities involved in the development process tend to have a stronger sense of ownership of government programs, thereby increasing the sustainability of development outcomes (Obar et al., 2017). From a social development perspective, community participation also plays a role in strengthening community capacity to identify problems, formulate solutions, and independently manage available resources (Ulum & Anggaini, 2020).

The relationship between community participation and development is based on social capital theory, which explains that social networks, trust, and collective norms that develop within a community can enhance citizens' ability to work together to achieve shared goals (Puspitaningrum & Lubis, 2018). Strong social capital encourages community participation in various development activities and strengthens the effectiveness of local government institutions. Therefore, the success of social welfare development depends not only on government capacity but also on the level of community participation and social cohesion (Syafar, 2017).

Participatory governance emphasizes the importance of community involvement in resource management and public decision-making (Lovan et al., 2017). Ostrom argues that local communities possess crucial knowledge and experience in formulating solutions to the various problems they face (Sillitoe, 2019). Therefore, development that actively involves communities tends to be more effective and sustainable than top-down approaches. In the context of local governance, community participation can be a crucial instrument for improving governance and promoting more inclusive development (Arafah & Winarso, 2020).

In Indonesia, the implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy has opened up greater opportunities for community participation in local governance. Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages grants village governments greater authority to manage development according to local community needs. This policy also emphasizes the importance of community involvement in all stages of village development through

various participatory forums such as village deliberations and village development planning meetings (Bihamding, 2020). Thus, local governance has become a crucial arena for the practice of participatory democracy and community-driven development (Bayo et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, various studies indicate that community participation in local governance in Indonesia still faces various challenges (Wiranta, 2015). Low community capacity, the dominance of local elites, limited access to information, and weak government transparency often hinder meaningful participation (Pandeya, 2015). As a result, many development programs do not fully reflect community needs and have not had an optimal impact on improving social welfare.

These problems become even more complex when linked to the conditions of coastal communities. Coastal communities are groups with distinct social, economic, and environmental characteristics compared to urban and rural communities in general. Most coastal communities depend on the fisheries and marine resources for their livelihoods, which are highly vulnerable to climate change, environmental degradation, market fluctuations, and various other socioeconomic risks (Akbar, 2017). This situation often results in coastal communities facing relatively higher levels of poverty and social vulnerability compared to other community groups (Rabby et al., 2019).

Bulukumba Regency is a coastal area in South Sulawesi Province with significant potential for marine and fisheries resources. This region is known as a significant center of fisheries and maritime activity in eastern Indonesia. However, coastal communities in Bulukumba Regency still face various development challenges, including limited access to public services, economic inequality, and social vulnerability that impact their quality of life. In this context, community participation in local governance is a strategic factor that can encourage development that is more responsive to the needs of coastal communities.

The Bulukumba Regency government has implemented several community development and empowerment programs through various village policies and programs. However, the success of these programs is greatly influenced by the level of community involvement in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development. Strong participation allows communities to directly express their aspirations, influence development priorities, and ensure that implemented programs truly benefit the social welfare of coastal communities (Foster, 2018).

While the importance of community participation has been widely discussed in development literature, research specifically examining the relationship between community participation in local governance and social welfare development in coastal communities remains relatively limited, particularly in the context of Bulukumba Regency. Most previous studies have focused on aspects of economic development, coastal resource management, or village policy implementation, while the relationship between community participation and social welfare has not been explored in depth.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the forms of community participation in local governance, identify factors that support and hinder community participation, and examine the impact of community participation on social welfare development in coastal communities in Bulukumba Regency. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of participatory governance and

social development studies, while also providing policy recommendations for local governments in strengthening community participation as a strategy for sustainable social welfare development in coastal areas.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore community participation in local governance and its impact on social welfare development in coastal communities of Bulukumba Regency. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand social processes, meanings, and lived experiences of community members regarding their involvement in local governance and development practices. The case study design allows for an in-depth and contextualized analysis of participatory governance within real-life settings, particularly in coastal villages where social and economic dynamics are highly complex.

Research Site

The research was conducted in selected coastal villages in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The selection of research sites was based on purposive considerations, particularly villages that demonstrate varying levels of community participation in development processes and have implemented social welfare programs. Coastal communities were chosen due to their unique socio-economic characteristics, including high dependency on marine and fishery resources, which significantly influence patterns of governance participation and social welfare outcomes.

Research Informants

Informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants had relevant knowledge and direct involvement in local governance and community development processes. Key informants included village heads, village officials, members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), community leaders, religious leaders, fishermen group leaders, women's groups, youth organizations, and community development facilitators. In addition, snowball sampling was applied to identify additional informants who possessed relevant information and experience related to community participation and social welfare development in the study area.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured guidelines to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and roles in local governance processes, including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development programs. Participant observation was carried out to directly observe community involvement in village meetings, development activities, and local organizational processes. Document analysis involved reviewing relevant documents such as Village Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMDes), Village Government Work Plans (RKPDDes), village budget reports, meeting minutes, and other policy-related documents.

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied triangulation techniques, including source triangulation, method triangulation, and time

triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different categories of informants. Method triangulation involved cross-checking data from interviews, observations, and documents. Time triangulation was applied by collecting data at different time periods to ensure consistency of findings. Additionally, member checking was conducted by confirming preliminary findings with selected informants to enhance the credibility of the data interpretation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an interactive model of analysis developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The analysis process consisted of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, relevant information was selected, simplified, and organized according to research focus. In the data display stage, the data were presented in narrative form, matrices, and thematic categories to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns, relationships, and key themes related to community participation and its impact on social welfare development in coastal communities.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the perspective of participatory governance, which emphasizes the active involvement of citizens in decision-making processes. The analysis is further supported by theories of citizen participation, social capital, and social welfare development. These theoretical perspectives are used to explain how community participation in local governance contributes to improved social welfare outcomes in coastal communities, particularly through mechanisms of collective action, trust-building, and institutional collaboration.

Results

Forms of Community Participation in Local Governance

The findings of this study reveal that community participation in local governance within the coastal communities of Bulukumba Regency takes place through various stages of the governance process, including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development programs. Community involvement is primarily facilitated through village deliberation forums, community meetings, fishermen associations, women's groups, youth organizations, and other local institutions. These participatory mechanisms provide opportunities for residents to express their needs, aspirations, and concerns regarding local development priorities. The active engagement of community members enables local governments to formulate policies and programs that are more responsive to local conditions and community expectations.

Participation in the planning process was found to be one of the most visible forms of community involvement. Community members regularly attended village development planning meetings (Musrenbangdes) where they proposed infrastructure projects, social assistance programs, livelihood support initiatives, and improvements in public services. Through these forums, residents were able to influence the allocation of village resources and contribute to decision-making processes. One village official explained:

“Community members actively participate in village meetings and often propose programs that directly address their daily needs, such as fishing facilities, clean

water access, and support for small businesses. Their input is considered during the preparation of village development plans."

Beyond planning activities, community participation was also evident during the implementation of development programs. Residents frequently contributed labor, resources, and local knowledge to support various community projects. Collective actions such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) were commonly observed during the construction of public facilities, environmental conservation activities, and community-based economic initiatives. This collaborative approach not only reduced implementation costs but also strengthened community ownership of development outcomes. A community leader stated:

"When a development project is implemented, people voluntarily contribute their time and effort. We work together because we believe that the success of these programs will benefit the entire community."

The study further found that community participation extends to monitoring and oversight functions. Community members regularly monitor the implementation of village programs and the utilization of village funds to ensure transparency and accountability. Public meetings and informal discussions serve as important platforms for evaluating government performance and identifying potential shortcomings in project implementation. This oversight role enhances trust between local government institutions and community members. According to a member of the Village Consultative Body (BPD):

"The community is encouraged to monitor development activities and budget expenditures. If there are concerns regarding project implementation, residents can raise them during village meetings or directly communicate with village officials."

Another significant form of participation was observed through community-based organizations and local associations. Fishermen groups, women's cooperatives, youth organizations, and religious associations function as important channels through which residents engage with local governance processes. These organizations facilitate communication between government institutions and community members while also promoting collective action to address local challenges. A leader of a fishermen's group explained:

"Our organization frequently collaborates with village authorities to discuss issues affecting fishermen. Through these discussions, we can convey our concerns and contribute ideas for improving community welfare."

Women's participation has also become increasingly important in local governance. Women actively participate in community meetings, social welfare programs, household economic activities, and educational initiatives. Their involvement broadens the inclusiveness of decision-making processes and ensures that development programs address the needs of diverse social groups.

Supporting Factors of Community Participation

The findings of this study indicate that community participation in local governance within the coastal communities of Bulukumba Regency is influenced by several supporting factors that encourage residents to become actively involved in development processes. These factors include inclusive local leadership, strong social capital,

transparency in governance, effective communication between government and citizens, and the presence of community-based organizations. Together, these elements create an enabling environment that strengthens civic engagement and facilitates collaborative governance practices.

One of the most significant supporting factors identified in this study is inclusive local leadership. Village leaders who actively encourage citizen involvement and maintain open communication with residents play a crucial role in fostering participation. Informants reported that village heads who regularly engage with community members and consider public input in decision-making processes tend to generate higher levels of trust and participation. Such leadership practices create a sense of ownership among residents and motivate them to contribute to local development initiatives. A village official explained:

"The village head always invites community members to participate in meetings and encourages everyone to express their opinions. This openness makes people feel valued and motivates them to become involved in development activities."

Another important factor is the presence of strong social capital within coastal communities. Social capital, reflected in trust, mutual cooperation, solidarity, and social networks, facilitates collective action and community engagement. The tradition of *gotong royong* remains deeply rooted in many villages and serves as a foundation for collaborative development efforts. Residents often work together to address community problems, implement projects, and support local initiatives. A community leader stated:

"Our community has a strong culture of helping one another. When there is a development project or a community activity, people voluntarily come together and contribute because they believe it benefits everyone."

The study also found that transparency and accountability in local governance significantly encourage community participation. When local governments openly share information regarding budgets, development plans, and program implementation, residents are more likely to trust public institutions and engage in governance processes. Transparency reduces suspicion and creates opportunities for meaningful public oversight. According to a member of the Village Consultative Body (BPD):

"People are more willing to participate when they know how village funds are being used. Public access to information increases trust and encourages residents to monitor and support development programs."

Furthermore, effective communication between local government and community members was identified as a critical supporting factor. Regular meetings, public consultations, and informal interactions provide channels through which information can be exchanged and community concerns can be addressed. Informants emphasized that timely and accurate communication helps residents understand government programs and encourages their involvement in decision-making processes. One village resident noted:

"Whenever there is a village meeting or a new program, the village officials inform us in advance. This makes it easier for people to participate because they know what is happening and how they can contribute."

The existence of community-based organizations and local institutions also plays a vital role in promoting participation. Organizations such as fishermen's associations, women's groups, youth organizations, and religious groups provide platforms for collective engagement and representation. These institutions help mobilize community members, disseminate information, and facilitate cooperation between citizens and government authorities. A leader of a fishermen's association explained:

"Our group often serves as a bridge between the community and the village government. Through our meetings, we can discuss issues affecting fishermen and communicate our recommendations to local authorities."

In addition, the study found that perceived benefits from participation motivate community members to become more actively involved in governance processes. Residents who observe tangible improvements in infrastructure, public services, and economic opportunities as a result of their participation are more likely to continue engaging in development activities. Positive experiences reinforce community trust in participatory governance and strengthen long-term civic involvement.

Barriers to Community Participation

The findings of this study reveal that despite the growing involvement of community members in local governance, several barriers continue to limit effective and inclusive participation in coastal communities of Bulukumba Regency. These challenges originate from socioeconomic conditions, institutional limitations, unequal access to information, and sociopolitical dynamics within local governance structures. Such barriers reduce the ability of community members to fully engage in decision-making processes and may hinder the effectiveness of participatory governance initiatives.

One of the primary barriers identified in this study is the limited educational background and capacity of community members. Many residents, particularly those engaged in traditional fishing activities, possess limited knowledge of administrative procedures, development planning mechanisms, and governance processes. As a result, some community members feel reluctant to express their opinions during public meetings or participate actively in discussions. This situation often leads to unequal participation, where only a small number of individuals dominate decision-making forums. A village official explained:

"Many residents attend village meetings, but not all of them feel confident enough to express their opinions. Some people believe that governance issues should be handled only by government officials or community leaders."

Another significant barrier is economic constraints and occupational demands. Most coastal residents depend on fishing and other marine-related activities for their livelihoods. The nature of these occupations often requires long working hours and unpredictable schedules, making it difficult for community members to attend meetings and participate in governance activities. Economic pressures frequently force residents to prioritize income-generating activities over civic engagement. A fisherman stated:

"We spend most of our time at sea, especially during the fishing season. Sometimes village meetings are held when we are working, so it is difficult for us to participate even if we want to."

The study also found that limited access to information remains a challenge for meaningful participation. Although local governments have made efforts to disseminate information regarding development programs and village meetings, not all residents receive such information in a timely manner. Information gaps are particularly evident among marginalized groups and residents living in remote areas of the village. As a consequence, some community members are unaware of opportunities to participate in planning and decision-making processes. One community member reported:

"There are times when information about meetings or development programs does not reach everyone. Some people only learn about decisions after they have already been made."

Another important obstacle is the persistence of elite domination in local governance processes. In some cases, influential community leaders, local elites, or individuals with close connections to government officials exert considerable influence over decision-making. This concentration of power can discourage broader community involvement and limit opportunities for ordinary citizens to contribute their perspectives. A member of a youth organization noted:

"Sometimes the same individuals are always involved in discussions and decision-making. This can make other community members feel that their opinions are less important or less likely to be considered."

The findings further indicate that low levels of trust in government institutions may reduce participation among certain segments of the population. Some residents expressed skepticism regarding whether their input would genuinely influence policy decisions or development outcomes. Previous experiences in which community proposals were not implemented have contributed to feelings of disappointment and disengagement. A local resident explained:

"There are people who feel that attending meetings does not make much difference because some of their suggestions are not followed up. As a result, they become less interested in participating."

Additionally, the study identified social and cultural barriers that affect participation among specific groups, particularly women and younger community members. Traditional social norms in some coastal communities may limit the involvement of these groups in public decision-making processes. Although participation has become more inclusive in recent years, unequal representation remains evident in certain governance forums. A female participant stated:

"Women are increasingly involved in village activities, but there are still situations where men dominate discussions and decision-making processes."

Institutional limitations also constitute a significant barrier. In some villages, the mechanisms for public participation are not fully developed, and opportunities for community engagement may be limited to formal meetings held only a few times each year. Without continuous engagement mechanisms, residents may find it difficult to maintain active involvement in governance processes.

The Impact of Community Participation on Social Welfare Development

The findings of this study demonstrate that community participation in local governance has made significant contributions to social welfare development in the coastal

communities of Bulukumba Regency. Active involvement of citizens in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes has enabled development programs to better reflect local needs and priorities. As a result, community participation has generated positive outcomes in several dimensions of social welfare, including economic empowerment, access to public services, social cohesion, community capacity building, and institutional trust.

One of the most notable impacts of community participation is the improvement of local economic conditions. Through active involvement in development planning and community-based economic programs, residents have gained greater access to livelihood opportunities, skills training, and income-generating activities. Participatory decision-making has allowed local governments to design programs that address the specific economic challenges faced by coastal communities, particularly those dependent on fisheries and small-scale enterprises. A fisherman explained:

"Because community members were involved in planning village programs, we received support for fishing equipment and training activities. These programs have helped us improve our income and support our families more effectively."

The study also found that community participation has contributed to improved access to public services and infrastructure. Residents who actively engage in village meetings are able to communicate their priorities regarding roads, clean water facilities, sanitation, education, and healthcare services. Consequently, development projects are more likely to respond to actual community needs. Many informants reported that increased participation has led to improvements in public facilities and service delivery within their villages. A village resident stated:

"The government now pays more attention to the needs expressed by the community. As a result, we have seen improvements in public facilities, including better roads and access to clean water."

Another important impact is the strengthening of community empowerment and local capacity. Participation provides opportunities for community members to develop leadership skills, increase their knowledge of governance processes, and become more confident in expressing their views. Through involvement in local decision-making, residents acquire practical experience in problem-solving and collective action. This process enhances the ability of communities to manage development initiatives independently and contributes to long-term social resilience. A community leader remarked:

"People have become more confident in expressing their ideas and participating in discussions. They now understand that they have an important role in determining the future of their community."

The findings further indicate that participation has strengthened social cohesion and collective solidarity among community members. Collaborative activities such as village meetings, community projects, and mutual cooperation initiatives have fostered stronger social relationships and a shared sense of responsibility for local development. These interactions help build trust among residents and encourage collective efforts to address common challenges. One informant explained:

“When people work together on development activities, relationships become stronger. We feel more united because everyone contributes to improving the community.”

Community participation has also enhanced government accountability and transparency, which are essential components of social welfare development. By actively monitoring development projects and village budgets, community members help ensure that public resources are utilized effectively and in accordance with local priorities. Increased public oversight encourages government officials to be more transparent and responsive to citizens' concerns. A member of the Village Consultative Body (BPD) stated:

“Community involvement in monitoring village programs has increased transparency. Government officials are more accountable because residents actively observe how projects are implemented.”

In addition, the study found that participation has contributed to greater trust in local government institutions. When residents are included in decision-making processes and see that their opinions are considered, they develop stronger confidence in local governance structures. This trust facilitates cooperation between government and citizens and creates a more supportive environment for development initiatives. A village official noted:

“When people see that their suggestions influence village policies, they become more willing to cooperate with the government and participate in future programs.”

Furthermore, community participation has played a role in promoting **social inclusion**, particularly for marginalized groups such as women, youth, and low-income households. Participatory forums provide opportunities for these groups to voice their concerns and contribute to development planning. Although challenges remain, increased inclusion has helped ensure that social welfare programs are more equitable and responsive to diverse community needs.

The Relationship between Community Participation and Social Welfare

The findings of this study reveal a strong and positive relationship between community participation in local governance and social welfare development in the coastal communities of Bulukumba Regency. Community participation functions as a critical mechanism through which local needs, aspirations, and priorities are integrated into development policies and programs. When citizens actively engage in governance processes, development interventions become more responsive, inclusive, and effective in addressing social and economic challenges. Consequently, higher levels of participation are associated with improved welfare outcomes, including better access to public services, increased economic opportunities, stronger social networks, and enhanced community resilience.

The study found that participation enables community members to directly influence development priorities and resource allocation. Through village meetings, public consultations, and community organizations, residents are able to communicate their concerns regarding infrastructure, education, healthcare, livelihood support, and social assistance programs. This involvement ensures that development initiatives are aligned with the actual needs of the community, thereby increasing their effectiveness in improving living conditions. A village official explained:

“When community members actively participate in planning meetings, the programs that are implemented are more relevant to their needs. This makes development outcomes more beneficial for the people.”

The relationship between participation and welfare is also evident in the area of economic development. Informants reported that communities with higher levels of participation tend to experience greater success in implementing livelihood programs, fisheries development initiatives, and community-based enterprises. Active participation allows residents to contribute ideas, identify local economic opportunities, and collaborate with government institutions to improve income-generating activities. A fisherman stated:

“Because we are involved in discussions about development programs, the government understands the challenges we face. As a result, several programs have helped improve our fishing activities and increase household income.”

In addition to economic benefits, participation contributes significantly to social welfare by improving access to essential public services. Community members who engage in governance processes are more likely to advocate for better educational facilities, healthcare services, clean water infrastructure, and social protection programs. The study found that villages with active citizen participation often demonstrate greater responsiveness to community needs and more equitable distribution of public resources. A community member noted:

“Through village meetings, we can express our concerns about education and healthcare services. Many of our suggestions have been considered, which has improved the quality of services available in our village.”

The findings further indicate that participation strengthens social welfare by enhancing social capital, including trust, cooperation, and collective action among community members. Participation in governance processes encourages interaction among residents and fosters a shared commitment to community development. Strong social relationships enable communities to mobilize resources more effectively and respond collectively to social and economic challenges. A community leader explained:

“When people participate together in development activities, they build stronger relationships and trust each other more. This unity helps the community solve problems more effectively.”

Another important aspect of the relationship between participation and social welfare is the development of community empowerment and self-reliance. Through active engagement in decision-making and development activities, residents gain knowledge, skills, and confidence that enable them to take a more proactive role in improving their own well-being. Participation encourages individuals to become active agents of change rather than passive recipients of government assistance. One village facilitator remarked:

“Participation helps people realize that they have the ability to influence development outcomes. This awareness increases their confidence and motivates them to contribute to community improvement.”

The study also found that participatory governance strengthens institutional trust, which in turn contributes to social welfare. When local governments involve citizens in decision-making processes and demonstrate transparency in program implementation,

residents develop greater confidence in public institutions. Increased trust facilitates cooperation between government and citizens, creating favorable conditions for successful development initiatives. A village official stated:

"People are more willing to support government programs when they feel their voices are heard. Trust between the community and the government is essential for achieving development goals."

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the relationship between community participation and social welfare is reciprocal in nature. While participation contributes to welfare improvement, enhanced welfare conditions also encourage greater civic engagement. Communities that experience positive development outcomes are often more motivated to participate in future governance activities because they perceive participation as meaningful and beneficial.

Discussion

Research findings indicate that community participation in local governance in coastal communities in Bulukumba Regency exists not only as an administrative mechanism in the development process, but has evolved into a social instrument that plays a role in shaping the relationship between the state and society at the local level. The research identified that community participation takes various forms, ranging from involvement in development planning and program implementation to monitoring the use of public resources, to participation through local organizations. These findings indicate that community participation in coastal areas is not limited to physical presence in formal government forums but also includes substantive involvement in policy production and social development processes (Famuditi, 2016).

These findings reinforce Arnstein's theory of citizen participation, which argues that effective participation not only provides space for communities to be present in decision-making processes but also provides them with opportunities to influence the direction of public policy. In the context of this research, the coastal communities of Bulukumba demonstrate characteristics of participation ranging from consultation to partnership, where communities are not only policy recipients but also involved in conveying aspirations and determining village development priorities. This indicates a shift from a top-down development approach to more collaborative governance (Irawan, 2017).

Interestingly, this study found that the most dominant form of participation was not formal participation through village deliberation forums, but rather community-based participation that grew from local social capital. The tradition of mutual cooperation, social solidarity, and intercommunity networks were the primary means of strengthening community involvement in development. These findings contribute to the social capital literature developed by Putnam, which emphasizes that social networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity are essential foundations for successful governance (Asroka, 2020). In the context of the Bulukumba coastal community, social capital has been shown to function as a collective resource capable of mobilizing community participation even when formal institutional capacity is limited.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that community participation cannot be understood solely as a procedural variable in governance, but also as a mechanism for social empowerment. Community involvement in the development process enables knowledge transfer, increases individual capacity, and strengthens community positions

in decision-making processes (Quiroz-Nino & Blanco-Encomieda, 2019). In other words, participation functions as a human development instrument that expands communities' ability to determine their own future. This finding aligns with the capability approach perspective developed by Sen, who views development as a process of expanding individuals' freedoms and abilities to achieve the lives they value (Pramono, 2020).

This study also found that the success of community participation is significantly influenced by the quality of local leadership. Villages with participatory leadership demonstrated higher levels of community engagement than villages still implementing bureaucratic leadership patterns. This finding indicates that participatory governance depends not only on the existence of formal participation mechanisms but also on the ability of local leaders to build trust, create spaces for dialogue, and facilitate citizen engagement (Irmadella, 2018). Thus, local leadership acts as a mediating factor connecting government structures with collective community action.

However, this study identified several barriers that limit the quality of community participation. The low capacity of some residents, the dominance of local elites, limited access to information, and the economic demands of coastal communities mean that participation is not fully inclusive. These findings demonstrate that the existence of participatory forums does not automatically result in equal participation (Duadji & Tresiana, 2016). In many cases, power imbalances exist that allow certain groups to wield greater influence than others. Therefore, the concept of participation needs to be understood critically, not simply as public presence in public forums, but as the ability of all social groups to contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process.

The theoretical implication of this research is the need to develop a more contextual perspective on participatory governance for coastal communities in developing countries. Most theories of participation and governance that have been developed to date are rooted in the experiences of Western countries with relatively strong institutional capacity. The findings of this study indicate that in the context of the Bulukumba coastal community, successful participation is supported more by local social capital than by formal bureaucratic capacity. Thus, this research contributes to the development of a participatory coastal governance model that places social capital as the primary foundation for building effective and inclusive governance.

From a practical perspective, this research demonstrates that efforts to improve the social welfare of coastal communities cannot rely solely on economic interventions or social assistance programs. Local governments need to strengthen the quality of community participation by building citizen capacity, expanding access to public information, strengthening community institutions, and creating more inclusive decision-making mechanisms. Development programs designed without community involvement have the potential to produce policies that are less suited to local needs and have a low level of sustainability.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the relationship between community participation and social welfare is multidimensional. Participation not only contributes to increased income or access to public services, but also strengthens social cohesion, trust in government, community collective capacity, and development sustainability. Thus, community participation can be viewed as a form of development capital that holds strategic value in creating long-term social welfare.

Conclusion

This study concludes that community participation plays a pivotal role in local governance and significantly contributes to social welfare development in the coastal communities of Bulukumba Regency. The findings reveal that community participation occurs through various forms, including involvement in development planning, program implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes, and engagement in local community organizations. Such participation is supported by inclusive leadership, strong social capital, transparency, effective communication, and the presence of community-based institutions, while being constrained by limited community capacity, economic pressures, information gaps, and the influence of local elites. The study further demonstrates that active community participation positively affects social welfare by improving economic opportunities, enhancing access to public services, strengthening social cohesion, increasing community empowerment, and fostering greater trust in local government institutions. Moreover, the findings highlight that participatory governance serves not only as a democratic mechanism but also as a strategic approach for achieving sustainable and inclusive social welfare development. Therefore, strengthening participatory governance structures and expanding opportunities for meaningful citizen engagement are essential for promoting long-term well-being and resilience in coastal communities.

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