

Community Empowerment Through Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis) In The Development Of The Kubah Basirih Tourist Attraction In The City Of Banjarmasin

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Abstract. Community-based tourism is promoted to support sustainable and inclusive development, with *Kelompok Sadar Wisata* (Pokdarwis) serving as key community institutions in Indonesia. This study analyzes the role of Pokdarwis in empowering local communities in the development of the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Destination in Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving community members, Pokdarwis, government officials, and visitors. The analysis focuses on four empowerment dimensions: community awareness, individual capacity, institutional capacity, and networking. The findings show that Pokdarwis effectively enhances community awareness and participation, particularly during religious events, and improves individual skills through training and creative economic activities. However, institutional capacity remains weak due to informal governance and limited participatory planning, while networking capacity is moderately effective through multi-stakeholder collaboration. Overall, community empowerment is moderately effective but requires strengthened participatory governance and sustainable capacity-building to support long-term religious tourism development.

Keywords: Community Empowerment; Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis); Community-Based Tourism; Religious Tourism; Collaborative Governance.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a strategic role in global economic and social development. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2024) estimates that by 2034 the tourism and travel sector will contribute approximately 11.4% of global Gross Domestic Product and support around 449 million jobs worldwide. Alongside this growth, sustainability concerns have encouraged the adoption of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a development approach that emphasizes local participation, empowerment, and equitable benefit sharing. However, despite its normative promise, CBT implementation frequently encounters challenges such as limited community capacity, weak institutional structures, and uneven participation (Scheyvens as cited in Adikampana, 2017).

In Indonesia, community empowerment has been formally integrated into tourism development policy through Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism. One of the key institutional mechanisms for operationalizing this policy is the establishment of *Kelompok Sadar Wisata* (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata* or Pokdarwis), which are intended to function as community-based organizations that mobilize local participation in destination management and promotion. Pokdarwis are expected to increase tourism awareness, enhance local skills, and foster collaboration among communities, government agencies, and private actors (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021). Nevertheless, empirical evidence indicates that many Pokdarwis operate with limited organizational capacity and have not fully succeeded in fostering inclusive and sustainable community empowerment.

From a development perspective, tourism should be understood as a multidimensional process that goes beyond economic growth to include social transformation, institutional strengthening, and expanded livelihood opportunities (Todaro & Smith, 2011). Community empowerment is therefore central to sustainable tourism development, as it refers to systematic efforts to enhance people's awareness, capabilities, and control over resources and decision-making processes that affect their lives (Suharto, 2021). In this framework, local communities are positioned as active agents rather than passive beneficiaries of tourism development.

This study focuses on the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Destination in Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan, which represents a significant example of community-based religious tourism. Centered on the pilgrimage site of Habib Hamid bin Abbas Bahasyim, Kubah Basirih holds strong spiritual, cultural, and historical significance and attracts both domestic and international visitors. The destination has received national recognition, including its inclusion in the Top 50 Indonesian Tourism Villages Award (ADWI) in 2022, indicating initial success in community-based tourism development.

Despite these achievements, structural challenges remain evident. The governance of Pokdarwis at Kubah Basirih is largely dominated by family members, while broader community participation is limited. Economically, local residents rely mainly on temporary and informal tourism-related activities, which tend to intensify only during events. This situation suggests that tourism development has not yet generated sustainable and inclusive economic benefits for the wider community. Moreover, government-led training programs have not been implemented in a systematic and site-specific manner, limiting their impact on long-term capacity building.

According to Mardikanto and Subianto, sustainable empowerment requires strengthening three interrelated dimensions: individual capacity, institutional capacity, and networking capacity (Syafari, 2025). Previous studies, such as Azizah et al. (2023), highlight the role of Pokdarwis as motivators and facilitators of community participation; however, limited attention has been given to the processes of awareness-building and multidimensional capacity strengthening, particularly in the context of religious tourism. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of Pokdarwis in fostering community awareness and strengthening individual, institutional, and networking capacities to support sustainable development of the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Destination.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to explore and understand the process of community empowerment through Kelompok Sadar Wisata (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata* or Pokdarwis) in the development of the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Destination in Banjarmasin City. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables in-depth exploration of social phenomena within their natural context and emphasizes meaning-making, interpretation, and the perspectives of the actors involved (Creswell, 2014; Moleong, 2018). The descriptive qualitative design was used to systematically describe community empowerment processes, particularly those related to awareness-building and capacity strengthening at the individual, institutional, and networking levels.

Data were collected using purposive sampling, based on the assumption that selected informants possessed relevant knowledge and direct involvement in tourism management and community empowerment activities. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informants, including the head and members of Pokdarwis Kubah Basirih, representatives of the Banjarmasin City Tourism Office, community leaders, local residents, and tourists. Secondary data were gathered from official documents, government reports, activity archives, photographs, and relevant literature to support and validate the primary data. In this study, the researcher acted as the main research instrument, supported by audio recorders, field notes, and visual documentation.

The data collection techniques consisted of interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted flexibly yet systematically to capture informants' experiences, perceptions, and views regarding the community empowerment process. Observations were carried out to directly examine Pokdarwis activities, levels of community participation, institutional dynamics, and interactions among local residents, tourism managers, and visitors within the tourism area. Documentation served as supplementary data to strengthen field findings and provide empirical evidence of tourism development programs and activities.

Data analysis was conducted iteratively and continuously through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, following the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Sugiyono, 2019). This analytical process aimed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings relevant to the research focus. Data trustworthiness was ensured through credibility

checks, including triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, as well as the use of supporting reference materials. Through these procedures, the findings are expected to achieve a high level of credibility and accurately represent the dynamics of community empowerment through Pokdarwis at the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Destination.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Study Context and Research Setting

This study was conducted at the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Site, located in Basirih Subdistrict, West Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. The site is one of the most prominent pilgrimage destinations in the region, as it is the burial place of Habib Hamid bin Abbas Bahasyim (Habib Basirih), a highly respected Islamic scholar whose influence remains strong within the local religious community.

Geographically, the study area is situated in a lowland river delta influenced by the Barito and Martapura river systems. Dense riverside settlements characterize the area and shape the socio-economic patterns of the local population. Accessibility via both land and river transportation reinforces the position of Kubah Basirih as an integral part of Banjarmasin's religious and cultural identity.

Strong religious traditions such as annual haul commemorations, maulid celebrations, and routine religious gatherings function as significant social capital for community based religious tourism development. Under these conditions, community empowerment through the Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis) becomes a strategic approach to promoting inclusive and sustainable tourism governance.

This study was conducted at the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Site in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. The site is a major pilgrimage destination associated with Habib Hamid bin Abbas Bahasyim, a respected Islamic scholar whose legacy continues to shape local religious practices. Geographically located in a river-delta settlement area, Kubah Basirih is accessible by both land and river transportation, reinforcing its role as a socio-religious and cultural node within the city (*Chambers, 1997*).

Strong religious traditions such as annual *haul* commemorations and routine religious gatherings function as social capital, enabling community-based tourism development. In this context, empowerment through Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis) represents an institutional mechanism to operationalize local participation in tourism governance (*Suharto, 2021; Nugroho & Negara, 2021*).

Community Awareness and Participation in Religious Tourism Development

The findings indicate that community awareness-building represents the foundational stage of the empowerment process. Pokdarwis Kubah Basirih initiated awareness programs through both formal and informal socialization mechanisms, including visual media, digital platforms, and well-established religious networks involving community and religious leaders.

Community awareness was further strengthened through direct participation in religious tourism activities, particularly during large-scale events such as the annual haul. Local residents were actively involved in managing parking areas, maintaining cleanliness, providing food services, and assisting pilgrims. These findings suggest that community participation has developed at a functional level, although it has not yet been fully institutionalized.

From the visitors' perspective, interview data reveal positive perceptions regarding local hospitality, environmental cleanliness, and the overall religious atmosphere. Nevertheless, limited availability of tourist information, directional signage, and local tour guides remains a major constraint, especially for visitors from outside the region. This finding underscores the need to complement awareness-building efforts with more professional tourism information and interpretation systems.

The findings indicate that community awareness-building constitutes the initial phase of empowerment. Pokdarwis Kubah Basirih facilitates awareness through socialization activities, digital communication, and religious networks involving community leaders. Such approaches align with empowerment theory, which emphasizes awareness as a prerequisite for meaningful participation (Freire, 2018; Laverack, 2006).

Community involvement intensifies during major religious events, where residents participate in visitor services, environmental management, and logistical support. However, participation remains predominantly implementation-oriented, with limited involvement in planning and evaluation stages. Similar patterns have been identified in community-based tourism studies, where participation often stops at operational engagement (Mulyanto, 2019; Azizah et al., 2023).

Visitor interviews reveal positive perceptions regarding hospitality and religious atmosphere, yet deficiencies persist in tourism information services, signage, and availability of local guides. These constraints suggest that awareness-building has not fully transitioned into structured tourism governance.

Strengthening Individual Capacity through Community-Based Empowerment

Strengthening individual capacity constitutes a crucial dimension of community empowerment in the Kubah Basirih area. Pokdarwis facilitated various skill development programs, particularly targeting micro and small enterprises (MSEs) based on local cultural products. These programs included training in traditional food processing and handicraft production, primarily involving residents living near the tourism site.

The results show that such training programs not only enhanced technical skills but also contributed to increased self-confidence and social participation among community members. The involvement of several residents as local facilitators reflects the emergence of participatory learning and horizontal knowledge transfer processes.

In addition to training activities, material support provided through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs such as vending carts and business equipment had a direct impact on the sustainability of local livelihoods. However, limited capital, time constraints, and insufficient product diversification remain significant challenges. Capacity development for local tour guides has been initiated, although the number of trained guides and the availability of guiding services remain limited.

Individual capacity strengthening represents a central dimension of community empowerment. Pokdarwis facilitates skill development programs focused on micro and small enterprises (MSEs), particularly in traditional food production and handicrafts. Such initiatives correspond with capacity-based empowerment models emphasizing skills, confidence, and economic self-reliance (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2019; Sudarmayanti, 2014).

Material support from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs—such as business equipment and vending facilities—has contributed positively to livelihood sustainability. Nevertheless, challenges persist in limited access to capital, time constraints, and insufficient product diversification. These findings reinforce previous research indicating that training without long-term mentoring yields limited sustainability outcomes (Devica et al., 2021; Yurdani et al., 2021).

Institutional Capacity of Pokdarwis and Governance Challenges

From an institutional perspective, Pokdarwis Kubah Basirih is characterized by a relatively informal organizational structure, dominated by kinship-based relationships. This arrangement facilitates rapid coordination and decision-making processes; however, it simultaneously constrains broader community participation.

The findings indicate that planning, evaluation, and documentation mechanisms have not yet been implemented systematically. Knowledge transfer from external training programs tends to occur on

an individual basis and is not evenly disseminated across the organization. Several community members continue to perceive tourism management as the exclusive responsibility of Pokdarwis rather than a shared collective endeavor.

These conditions suggest that further institutional strengthening is required, particularly in terms of transparency, accountability, and participatory governance, to enable Pokdarwis to function more effectively as a community empowerment agent.

From an institutional perspective, Pokdarwis Kubah Basirih operates with a relatively informal governance structure characterized by kinship-based coordination. This structure facilitates flexibility and rapid decision-making but simultaneously limits transparency and broader community participation. Similar governance trade-offs have been documented in informal community organizations managing tourism destinations (Nuridin, 2015; Laverack, 2006).

Planning, evaluation, and documentation mechanisms remain weakly institutionalized, and knowledge transfer from external training programs tends to be individualized rather than organizational. As a result, tourism management is often perceived as the responsibility of Pokdarwis elites rather than a collective community mandate. This condition reflects partial empowerment rather than transformative governance (Suharto, 2021).

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Network Strengthening

Strengthening institutional networks emerged as a key factor in sustaining religious tourism development. Pokdarwis Kubah Basirih has established collaborations with multiple stakeholders, including local government agencies, state-owned enterprises, and private sector actors, primarily through training initiatives and CSR programs.

Support received from these partnerships includes tourism infrastructure development, MSE facilities, and assistance for religious and social events. The local government particularly the Tourism Office acts as a facilitator and supervisory body, while Pokdarwis is granted operational autonomy in program implementation.

Although this collaborative model has functioned relatively effectively, the study identifies ongoing challenges related to human resource capacity, program continuity, and the absence of an integrated destination marketing strategy.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration plays a significant role in sustaining tourism development. Pokdarwis has established partnerships with local government agencies, state-owned enterprises, and private-sector actors, primarily through training programs and CSR initiatives. These collaborations support infrastructure development, MSE facilities, and religious tourism events.

The local government functions mainly as a facilitator and supervisory body, while Pokdarwis retains operational autonomy. This arrangement aligns with collaborative governance theory, which emphasizes shared roles, trust-building, and negotiated authority among stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2008). However, long-term sustainability remains challenged by limited human resource capacity and the absence of an integrated destination marketing strategy.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Pokdarwis plays a pivotal role in mediating interactions among local communities, government institutions, and private sector stakeholders in the development of religious tourism at Kubah Basirih. The empowerment process operates across four main dimensions: community awareness-building, individual capacity strengthening, institutional capacity development, and collaborative network enhancement. However, community participation remains largely concentrated at the implementation stage, while involvement in decision-making processes is still limited. This pattern aligns with broader community empowerment literature, which emphasizes that substantive participation is essential for achieving sustainable community-based tourism.

Therefore, the future development of religious tourism at Kubah Basirih requires a more inclusive empowerment strategy grounded in collaborative governance, long-term capacity development, and equitable benefit distribution to ensure that social, economic, and cultural gains are shared more

broadly among local residents. Nevertheless, community participation remains concentrated at the implementation stage, with limited involvement in strategic decision-making. This pattern reflects a procedural rather than substantive participation model, consistent with critiques in community-based tourism literature (Chambers, 1997; Laverack, 2006).

Furthermore, the religious context introduces ethical considerations that shape tourism practices, requiring a balance between economic objectives and spiritual authenticity. Effective empowerment in religious tourism therefore necessitates inclusive governance, sustained capacity development, and value-based management (Fissu'ada, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that community empowerment through the Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis) at the Kubah Basirih Religious Tourism Destination has produced moderate and uneven outcomes across key empowerment dimensions. Pokdarwis has played a central role in raising community awareness and facilitating functional participation in tourism-related activities, particularly during large-scale religious events. These efforts have contributed to a shift in local perceptions of Kubah Basirih from a purely pilgrimage site toward a destination with social and economic value. However, awareness-building remains largely normative and has not fully evolved into critical consciousness that enables broad-based and sustained community engagement in decision-making processes.

In terms of individual capacity strengthening, skills training and creative economic programs have enhanced residents' competencies, confidence, and participation, especially among micro and small enterprise actors. Nevertheless, economic empowerment remains constrained by limited access to capital, market networks, and long-term mentoring, resulting in continued dependence on government programs and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Institutional capacity represents the weakest aspect of empowerment. The kinship-based and informal governance structure of Pokdarwis facilitates coordination but limits transparency, inclusiveness, and systematic planning and evaluation. As a result, tourism management is still perceived as the responsibility of a small group rather than a collective community endeavor.

Regarding networking capacity, Pokdarwis has established collaborative relationships with government institutions and private-sector actors, reflecting a collaborative governance approach to community-based tourism development. While these partnerships support infrastructure development and capacity-building initiatives, internal communication and equitable distribution of benefits among community members remain limited.

Overall, the empowerment process at Kubah Basirih demonstrates that community-based religious tourism can contribute to local development when supported by active local institutions. However, achieving sustainable and inclusive outcomes requires strengthening participatory governance, institutional professionalism, and long-term capacity development to ensure that social, economic, and cultural benefits are shared equitably among local residents.

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