

ARTICLE

Implementation Gap: Realization of Coastal Community Empowerment Program in the Era of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Johan Pahlawan District, West Aceh Regency

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused chaos in the living order of the world community, including Indonesia. As a maritime country with a high population in coastal areas, the pandemic has caused the economic stability of fishermen to decrease drastically, so solutions are needed in the form of empowerment programs not to cause greater problems. This study aims to find the implementation of the coastal community empowerment program carried out by the government in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, Johan Pahlawan District, West Aceh Regency, which is the centre of fisheries and marine management locations in the Regency. The research method that the author uses is descriptive qualitative. The results found through this research are that the government's empowerment during the pandemic is mostly only in the form of financial assistance. They even realize the aid funds provided to fishermen groups are still not on target. Therefore, this study concludes that implementing the coastal community empowerment program by the government remains inappropriate and unsuccessful in overcoming the problems faced by fishermen back from the past to the current Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the government must prioritize the community's needs by improving the management of fishermen's businesses, such as forming cooperatives and increasing cooperation with partners, which are the main aspects of improvement to improve the fishermen's standard of living.

A. INTRODUCTION

People who live and reside in coastal areas with sources of income that depend on catching fish and marine wealth, both nautical and maritime, are referred to as coastal communities. Fishermen, farmers, fishermen and fishery product entrepreneurs, both small and medium scale, are the majority of coastal community professions. Meeting the needs of people

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with fishermen's livelihoods is often only enough to meet daily or short-term needs, so they have not been able to cover the needs fully. This was then exacerbated when the Covid-19 outbreak broke out, adding to concerns in the economic sector due to the disruption of interactions in the fisheries sector due to restrictions on the marketing and export of marine products (Mardhiah et al., 2020). The pandemic has also resulted in huge losses for fishermen related to the decline in prices from catches and has also become a factor triggering fishermen to be in debt (Kholis., Fratnesi, & Wahidin, 2020; Tapung et al., 2020). Therefore, most fishermen need to fulfil urgent needs, such as basic needs (Bennett et al., 2020).

The fulfilment of demands on the problems of coastal communities implemented by the government can be almost uniform between regions because central regulations guide it. In Paotere Port, Makassar City, the government assisted with basic facilities to support the increase in fishermen's production. However, government policies still seem to overlap. So even though it assists, the government's strategy is considered not integrated to improving the economic condition of fishermen during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, problems in fishing communities remain improperly responded to, especially in the sociocultural (Murni., Muhammad., & Sabiq, M, 2021). This makes assistance without empowerment have a less positive impact on the community.

In addition to the fisheries sector, the government's response also applies to the agricultural sector. In the agricultural sector in East Java (Ulya, 2020), the Regional Government focuses on guaranteeing the availability of food and basic needs due to panic buying during the pandemic. The solutions offered by the government are optimizing the local potential of agrarian areas, strengthening regulations, increasing cooperation with related parties, product diversification, marketing digitalization, and increasing access to capital and education. However, there has been no proof that the alternatives offered are effective and achieve the expected goals. The content of the solutions offered includes empowerment activities.

Meanwhile, efforts to overcome the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on fishermen's associations in Pandeglang Regency are carried out through empowerment. However, this empowerment, not facilitated by the government but by the university service team for one month, can train the community's soft skills. Still, the facilities and infrastructure for empowerment are considered very limited. Based on the implementation evaluation, the community still needs continuous government assistance and education about diversifying community economic resources based on local wisdom (Suseno et al., 2021).

As an answer to the problems of fishermen during the pandemic, the implementation of Law No. 7 of 2016 concerning Fishermen's Protection and Empowerment are two concepts that go hand in hand. If the protection is carried out properly, empowerment can be optimal. Based on the results of the research (Fernanto., Amiruddin., & Maulana, 2022), aspects of communication and realization of empowerment programs have not been carried out effectively and evenly by the government. This is due to budget refocusing where empowerment is still partial, and there are no institutional donors, low fishermen's education conditions and misuse of aid funds without the element of self-empowerment by fishermen.

Economic instability and gaps in the quality of life of fishermen due to the Covid-19 pandemic also occurred in the West Aceh Regency area. The number of fishermen in West Aceh Regency in 2020 reached more than 3000, both sea- and water catches, all of which rely on the sale of daily catches as a source of needs. Johan Pahlawan Subdistrict, which is the centre of marketing of district seafood, has a high number of capture fishery households reaching 2,078 (53.8%) (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Aceh Barat, 2021). Since the enactment of Governor Regulation Number 51 of 2020 concerning The Improvement of Covid-19 Handling, fishermen's economic conditions have been unstable. Weak people's purchasing power, falling fish prices, prohibition of crowding, and the need for social restrictions have

decreased fishermen's income. In addition to minimizing interactions on land, it turns out fishermen in West Aceh are also faced with an appeal to avoid selling fish on ships.

Based on information from local mass media, fishermen in West Aceh Regency are reported to have experienced the impact of economic decline due to the outbreak of the Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19). The majority of fishermen earn lower incomes than usual. Even though around 70% of West Aceh fishermen have been equipped with *Kusuka* Cards, that is a professional identity card for business actors in the marine and fisheries sector which serves as a database for the distribution of protection, empowerment, easy monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs of the Ministry (Serambinews, 2020).

The policy of empowering coastal communities is a strategy of the West Aceh government to improve the quality of the fishermen's economy in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes empowerment through the provision of assistance and partnership. Considering the problem of the reality of the fisherman's condition, empowerment in knowledge and the provision of assistance and exploitation of the potential for local wisdom is necessary. This is because it is considered strategic to support efforts to develop regional and national fisheries during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the preliminary observations, the government's empowerment is only in the form of providing aid/funds. In practice, it remains comprehensive for fishermen in Johan Pahlawan District. Fishermen need other forms of empowerment because the conditions have not improved; thus, the empowerment policies proved ineffective. Therefore, an in-depth study is conducted to find various empowerment measures that the government has done, and the causes of the failure become the focus of what the researchers want to explore.

Based on the problems described, the author is interested in analyzing the government's empowerment program, followed by a description of various issues that become obstacles and successes in empowering coastal communities in the pandemic era. The purpose of this study is to describe the obstacles and problems encountered in the coastal community empowerment program during the Covid-19 pandemic, as the program did not have the desired impact. The elaboration of solutions to overcome obstacles in implementing empowerment programs is also sought so that government empowerment activities will be expected to empower coastal communities, especially fishermen. Therefore, the researcher wants to conduct a study entitled *Implementation Gap: Realization of the Coastal Community Empowerment Program in the Era of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Johan Pahlawan District, West Aceh Regency*.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Public Policy Implementation

Policy implementation is executing a predetermined plan concerning time, actors, resources and actions. The implementation is, in fact, not a simple activity, but it contains certain mechanisms from the beginning to the end so that the goals can be achieved. Guntur Setiawan (Setiawan, 2004) stated that implementation is an expansion of activities that adapts to each other in the interaction process, namely the interaction of goals and actions utilizing the network of bureaucrats and implementers effectively.

Policy implementation reflects the set contained in the public policy process. Because the policy implementation, based on Anderson's view, is a component of the public policy process after the adoption formulation is conducted, the implementation will contain such questions as who does it, what is done and what kind of impact is felt (Kadji, 2015). The relationship between implementation and public policy is very close because implementation is an effort to realize policies to achieve goals or objectives. Understanding the importance of implementation, many world experts who came up with this theory, such as Van Meter and Van Horn (Grindle, 1980), stated that implementation is an effort to build a network so that

public policy goals are achieved. Edward III (Akib, 2010) also mentioned that effective implementation is one of the most important aspects of achieving public policy objectives.

The outline that can be taken from the description of the meaning of policy implementation is that the existence of implementation becomes an element that cannot be separated from the public policy process because it has a very important role. Although it is crucial and should be considered, the realization of implementing a policy does not always go according to the initial planning. As a result, the procedure may be different to the reason the policy cannot be the answer to the problem. In line with this description Edward III (Kadji, 2015) gave the view that:

"...If a policy is inappropriate and cannot alleviate the problem for which it was designed, it will probably be a failure no matter how well it is implemented. But even a poorly implemented brilliant policy may fail to achieve its designers' goals".

From the above opinion, it can be explained that when the policy is not right or does not reduce the problems faced by the community, policy failures are possible, albeit sometimes very well. This is because a brilliant policy will be useless if it is poorly implemented, so the objectives and benefits of the policy will not be achieved. As a result, policy failures become the resulting output. This began to underlie the concept of implementation failure in public policy because a mismatch between the expectations and the reality of public policy can occur.

Failure of Public Policy Implementation and *Implementation Gap*

Implementing the policy will certainly not always be as expected and successful because every policy has the possibility of failure caused by various factors. Anderson's (1984) view of the factors driving public policy not to work well (fail) illustrates the practical reality of policies that have implemented defects. This concept is known as the causative factor of failure to implement public policy. Anderson's opinion (in Situmorang, 2016) explains that failure can occur due to several reasons, namely:

Insufficient Resources

Programs that are run often stall their implementation or are stopped due to inadequate supporting resources; the financial aspect is the most crucial factor in determining the success or failure of the policy, although there are other factors.

Inappropriate Methods of Policy Implementation

This includes the methods used in the implementation of policies. It can be compared to a land-reform policy (agrarian reform). Although the state has sometimes set policies as development strategies, the practice is prolonged, so the impacts felt are far from expected or even reduce the effect of policy objectives.

Other public problems affecting effective policy

The case method of this indicator is that the low-cost housing program policy is implemented to make it easier for people at the bottom to have a place to live through gradual payments. However, on the other hand, the government is also trying to realize agricultural development through efforts to expand land. This illustrates overlapping policies and actually results in conflicts between one policy and another so that the targets to be achieved cannot be consistently implemented.

Public response

This includes reflecting on people's attitudes in making adjustments and responding to applicable public policies. This attitude can eliminate the policy's purpose when the response tends not to support the program's implementation.

Great cost

The costs to solve the problem are sometimes greater than the problem to overcome. The excuse is the eradication program of crime caused by thugs in big cities such as Jakarta. The crime is not a major crime, but eradicating it requires greater costs because it requires strict police guarding the implementation of curfews and surveillance, and individual repression.

Failure of implementation means there is a lack of success in implementing policies; in other words, it becomes a discrepancy in the expectations and realities of the policies implemented. This is the so-called implementation gap concept. Implementation gap is a condition that results in a difference between what has been achieved and what is expected based on implementation capacity, namely the ability of the government to implement policies (Andrew Dunsire, 1978; Wahab, 2014; Sari & Mahara, 2019). The implementation gap that occurs in the practice of public policy, according to Nakagaki (2013), is caused by several factors, including political, sociocultural and economical. Continuing Andrew Dunsire's Implementation gap theory, there are two classifications of policy implementation failures, namely:

There are no failed implementations. They are implementing policies that are not following the plan because there are problems with the implementor. The point is that the initial policy did have a good plan or formulation. However, the implementing party may not cooperate properly in the success of the implementation, does not practice the concept of efficiency, shows a negative side of disposition, does not understand in detail the tasks and problems at hand, or the problems faced are beyond their power, and the ability to overcome the problem. As a result, various obstacles cannot be overcome because the internal elements of implementation do not yet have adequate quality.

Unsuccessful implementation is a condition of policies that are implemented failed due to various factors or not merely the implementer. Implementation failures in this context generally come from external conditions, so the policies implemented do not give results or desired impacts. The various factors in question include several indicators, including: first, bad policy: The policy is not the answer to the problem at hand; it is not to the target community's needs or even contrary to applicable rules. Second, bad execution: The implementation stage is acute in policy implementation, so when the implementation process is terrible, it does not run properly, and the policy cannot be applied optimally. Third, bad luck: When the policy implemented is not to the needs, and the implementation practice is not adequate, the policy will have bad luck, in other words, facing failure.

Community Empowerment Concept

Community empowerment is a process to make the community independent in improving the economy by utilizing the local potential and developing existing resources; in terms of empowerment, the community is a subject and object in the empowerment program. Community empowerment is closely related to sustainable development, which explains empowerment as a carriage of community success in implementing a sustainable program both economically, socially and ecologically (Yunus & Fadli, 2017).

The strategy in community empowerment is oriented towards economic growth. The program to be carried out is people-centred or a people-centred development model. It consisted of education, accessibility, action, and better institution to improve people's lives

based on people's aspirations and expectations to meet the needs of life. Empowering the community, in other words, enables the community in terms of economy (Handayani et al., 2021).

C. METHOD

The study was conducted in Johan Pahlawan Subdistrict, West Aceh Regency. The reason for choosing this location is because Johan Pahlawan District has coastal communities, the majority of whom work as fishermen. It can be seen from the number of captured fishery households. West Aceh is dominated by the population of Johan Pahlawan District, reaching 2,078 or 53.8%; the total poor in West Aceh reaches 18.81% or 39.83% of the population from a total of 200,579 population. The number of underprivileged families in West Aceh is worth paying attention to, reaching 9,839. Johan Pahlawan Subdistrict has the highest number of underprivileged families touching 1,179 families (BPS West Aceh Regency, 2021). The number of poor people is still relatively high. During the Covid-19 pandemic, people in the area were also deeply impacted by the economic downturn.

This research uses a qualitative approach that is descriptive and analytical. The author will analyze and describe the phenomenon related to the gap in the implementation of coastal community empowerment programs in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic by looking for in-depth answers from the research that has been previously carried out.

In qualitative research, the research cycle begins with selecting research informants. It was then continued by asking questions related to informants and collecting data related to questions that can answer problems and programs to help the community's economy. Government efforts will be made to help the economic empowerment program of the coastal communities be appropriately resolved. Then compiling records of data that have been collected in the field and analyzing them. This process repeatedly occurs, depending on the scope and depth of the required data from the research questions themselves (Hardani, 2020).

Qualitative research takes into account the belief that social interaction occurs due to the existence of understanding, direct data collection, and the use of a thorough approach. In addition, a very influential factor in qualitative research is an ideology (Raco, 2020). The use of documentation methods from the research results is also used to obtain research answers related to government policies in empowering coastal communities. In other words, the research data collection technique uses a triangulation method consisting of interviews, observations and documentation. According to Zamili (2015) The triangulation method is a technique to search for the same information in different situations and use other triangulation techniques to connect the same object.

Informant Determination Techniques

Informants that are interviewees are primary sources of information and are important sources of research (Silalahi, 2009). Informants are established through purposive techniques, that is, the selection of who the subject is in the best position to provide the required information. Informants in this study were divided into several categories, namely local government actors, fishermen's organization actors and fishermen's community actors. The informants who are the interviewees can be seen in table 1:

Table 1. List of Informants

| No. | Position | Agency |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | Head of Service | Marine and Fisheries Service of West Aceh Regency |
| 2. | Head of Fisheries and Capture | Marine and Fisheries Service of West Aceh Regency |
| 3. | Head of District | Johan Hero District |
| 4. | Secretary of District | Johan Hero District |
| 5. | Chairman of the Fishermen's Association | Indonesian Fishermen's Association (HNSI) of West Aceh Regency |
| 6. | Village Chief (Keuchik) | Gampong Pasir, Johan Pahlawan District |
| 7. | Bangku Businessman | Johan Pahlawan Subdistrict |
| 8. | Fisherman | Johan Pahlawan Fishing Society |
| 9. | Fisherman | Johan Pahlawan Fishing Society |
| 10. | Fisherman | Johan Pahlawan Fishing Society |
| 11. | Fisherman's spouse | Johan Pahlawan Fishing Society |

Source: Results of Informants Determinations by Researchers in 2021

Data Collection Techniques

According to [Herdiansyah \(2011\)](#), qualitative data collection techniques can be categorized into several techniques, including: first, observation. Researchers use non-participant observations, namely coming directly, observing and then recording behaviour as it occurs in the actual situation of the object under study. Observations are carried out using health protocols. Second, interview. In this study, researchers used unstructured interview techniques carried out directly by prioritizing health protocol and via WA, google forms and telephone to get definite information. Third, documentation studies are one way to get an idea from the subject's point of view through the written medium or other documents such as literature, books, scientific journals, legislation, etc.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique is very important in a study. According to Miles and Huberman (in [Moleong \(2005\)](#), can be taken through four stages, namely: first, Data Collection is a stage in the research process that is very important, namely collecting data that has been obtained in the field. The data obtained will answer the problem formulation, second, Data Reduction. Primary and secondary data obtained from the field are then reduced, summarized and then separated according to interests (principal) focused on selecting the most important ones. Third, the presentation of data is intended to make it easier for researchers to see the picture as a whole or certain parts of the research data. Fourth, Drawing Conclusion (Verification). Data verification is carried out continuously throughout the research process in qualitative research. From the first moment it enters the field, and during the data collection process, researchers strive to analyze and search for meaning from the collected data.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Internal Constraints of Coastal Community Empowerment Programs During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Livelihood as a fisherman in the fisheries sector is the main profession for coastal communities in Johan Pahlawan District. The community's welfare depends on using marine resources, so this must be carried out sustainably and responsibly. The condition of coastal

communities during the Covid-19 pandemic shows extreme economic limitations because, before the pandemic, the income of middle and lower-fishing communities was relatively low. The policy of crowd prohibition makes fishermen's catches a source of daily income unsold or sold at low prices. This is the main obstacle to the economic welfare of fishermen.

To elaborate on the obstacles that cause fishermen's empowerment, researchers use the view (Anderson, 1984) of the factors causing policies not to work well or fail. Based on adjustments to Anderson's opinion, three findings refer to the theory, namely the problem of insufficient resources, inappropriate implementation methods and other public problems as internal constraints. In contrast, other problems are findings in the field. For more details, please note the following description:

Insufficient Resources

Budget and personnel constraints from the government are obstacles to the scope of resources. The West Aceh Regency Government as a pioneer of improvement, has been trying to help by realizing the policy of providing Direct Cash Assistance (BLT). However, this policy has not been able to improve the welfare of coastal communities due to the absence of varied assistance or other assistance. Coastal community empowerment programs such as training and coaching are also constrained to be implemented due to the refocusing of the budget for handling Covid-19 and limited operational personnel so that various empowerment efforts remain limited. The reality of the research results by the findings Kuhl (2021) shows that insufficient or scarce resources of policy implementors will be a big opposition to the policy access process.

At the village level, the resources in question are limited in the empowerment budget due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so they cannot be implemented. The empowerment of the poor at the village level (Jayasinghe & Wickramasinghe, 2011) allows the community to be involved fully in decision-making and the implementation of empowerment programs so that the impact can be felt directly by the community. The research results describe that budget constraints and operational personnel are the main obstacles to empowering coastal communities during the pandemic. It can also be said that there has not been any empowerment carried out by the government, either coaching, training or economic improvement support other than financial assistance, even though the community is very hopeful.

Inappropriate Methods of Policy Implementation

Inappropriate implementation methods are reflected in the findings of the assistance program policy that has not been on target. This is due to the problem of inaccurate data collection, where the survey data obtained as a determination of beneficiaries does not match the reality in the field. The inaccuracy of the recipient's target is an obstacle in distributing assistance to fishermen. This is the view of Nugroho et al. (2021), where the mismatch of receipts seems to be a common challenge that is always faced when realizing programs, especially social assistance within the scope of conditional cash assistance and subsidies.

The West Aceh Regency government has empowered fishing communities or coastal communities, whether during the Covid-19 period or before, such as training for fishing communities, providing fishing houses and direct cash assistance (BLT). The obstacle is the target of the assistance that is not on target. So that people in need do not receive assistance, or some people receive double assistance. Habibullah (2019) research supports this statement. There are often cases where there are parties who receive various assistance at once, when in fact, parties who have obtained Poor Family Assistance (PKH), for example, can no longer receive Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) (Habibullah, 2019).

Based on the study's results, the fishermen stated that during the Covid-19 Pandemic, life as a fisherman was very difficult. Fishermen hope that there will be parties who facilitate their

livelihoods by providing boots because fishermen need not only financial assistance but also fishery facilities.

Other Public Problems Affecting Policy

According to the research results in Johan Pahlawan District, the obstacles to the unimplemented empowerment programs at the village level, as the main scope of implementation of empowerment programs, are caused by the absence of a budget. The village budget is more devoted to improving the physical environment, which is more important, such as overcoming flood problems, resulting in budgeting for the empowerment of coastal communities during the Covid-19 Pandemic remains zero.

The Failure of the Government's Efforts to Maintain the Stability of Fish Prices

Unstable prices can result in fish prices can soar up or even falling, harming fishermen. Based on the study results, when the number of fish caught in abundance, the price of fish plummeted. This proves that the government has not been able to carry out its duties to maintain the stability of fish prices.

Instability is also caused by fish marketing involving tiered intermediaries, so the price that fishermen receive from intermediaries will be very much different from that received by intermediaries from the community. According to (Kruijssen et al., 2020), the existence of a long marketing chain can result in losses for fishermen because there is an imbalance between the income of fishermen who sell fish and the intermediary sellers to the community. Fishermen are expected to be able to sell their catches or products so that fishermen's losses due to price instability can be minimized.

Marketing Limitations

During the Covid-19 pandemic, fishermen's catches in West Aceh Regency can be said to be abundant but cannot be marketed outside the region. This is also an obstacle due to the narrowness of the marketing realm. Previously, the marketing of fish catches could reach reservoirs in areas outside the province, such as Sibolga to Medan. Still, for the current conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, delivery cannot occur, resulting in many fish that are not sold, buried, rotten and harming fishermen. We need to know the limitations of marketing in accordance with the opinion Guerra-marrero et al., (2021) that all professions engaged in fisheries and marine fields are affected by the pandemic, even due to marketing limitations, especially for *artisanal* fishermen or small fishermen, which is the cause of fishermen's income falling by around 40% from usual. Until now, there is no solution related to this matter. This condition must be a full concern so that people's catches can be marketed at normal prices, have a wide market, do not harm fishermen, and can help improve the economy of coastal communities in Johan Pahlawan District.

The Inability of Fishermen in Business Management

Based on the study's results, not all fishermen have experienced a drastic decline in the economic sector. There are still fishermen with incomes with a middle income, but the reason why these fishermen become poor is the inability to manage their business properly. Starting from weak financial management, inaccurate sales system, and fishermen only know how to catch fish but do not know the value and quality of the fish. This obstacle can be categorized as an obstacle related to business management, fisherman's livelihood and income, so in this case, the education provided to coastal communities is very necessary. This is supported by the view Hossain et al., (2021) that education is an important thing to be given to fishing communities in order to be able to manage their income very efficiently and by the conditions

they experience due to the pandemic because often the condition of fishermen suffering from financial difficulties will affect the ability of their households to meet basic needs.

Different Fishermen's Income Hierarchy

The income of fishermen at the research site varies, depending on the type of search tool. Fishermen are categorized into several kinds-first, coral fishermen, namely skipjack fishermen (fairly high income). Second, fishermen who fish one week home for one week (fishermen with a rather good economy). Third, *ramet* fishermen and fishermen who go back early in the morning (the economy is low, only meets the primary needs of daily). Fourth, land trawl fishermen (it is still very difficult to raise the standard of living due to the small scale of the catchment area and simple fishing gear); even during this pandemic, the search for land trawl fishermen cannot be done. This proves that land trawl fishermen dominate fishermen's poverty. The difference in income between fishermen is a trigger for why their quality of life is different-the lower the hierarchy, the lower the quality of the economy. Therefore, according to (Suardi & Cahaya, 2015), the sense of concern of coastal communities classified as middle to the upper economy must care for the middle to low-income fishermen to create diversification as a strategy to improve the continuity of economic conditions and maintain the survival of fishermen.

External Constraints of Coastal Community Empowerment Programs During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Economic empowerment for coastal communities is one of the efforts made to build the community's economic independence in a planned, systematic and sustainable manner. However, until now, the empowerment provided by the West Aceh Government for coastal communities is still constrained and has not been on target. If studied from the environment, obstacles can also be in the form of external obstacles that come from outside coastal communities; here is the description:

Government Regulation Against Fishermen

The issuance of a regulation imposed by the government, namely the prohibition of crowding, has clearly resulted in most coastal communities complaining of declining income. This is a trigger to how difficult the service community is facing during the pandemic period, as viewed by Truchet et al. (2021). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, fishermen's activities are not normal, and it seems as if the fisherman's income and livelihoods have begun to be marginalized. Therefore, fishermen need the right regulation without any adverse impact to face the problems caused by the previous regulation.

The Length of the Marketing Chain

The amount of fishermen's income every day is uncertain due to the length of the marketing chain and the involvement of intermediaries, namely businessmen (Toke) or middlemen, as determinants of fish prices, according to the findings in the field. Therefore, the existence of an intermediary in a transaction directly tends to lower the price received by the original seller than that of the intermediary (Kumse et al., 2021). This is because intermediaries will buy fish from fishermen cheaper, then sell it directly to the community higher, so that the price received by fishermen from the businessman (Toke) will be lower than the selling price of Toke in the community. This is one factor that also weakens fishermen's economic condition. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it can be said that when the selling price of fish determined by toke decreases, fishermen's income will also greatly decrease, so this adverse marketing chain must be eliminated.

Based on the description of the obstacles faced in the coastal community empowerment program in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic. This describes the implementation gap that occurs. The description of the failures can be seen from the point of view of the implementation gap theory on unsuccessful implementation (failure due to various factors or not only in the implementer), which consists of the following indicators: (1) Bad policy: actually, the empowerment program policy is in line with the applicable rules. However, the problem is when the financing program does not provide answers according to the community's needs. Because the policymaking process does not involve community participation, the government's various decisions and policies are unilateral; (2) The bad execution encountered in implementing the program is in the empowerment program in the form of assistance, especially in the form of living cost assistance funds, which are not on target due to errors in data input by the government, so that the benefits of the program are not felt by the rightful party (bad luck).

Efforts to Improve the Empowerment of Fishing Communities During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The decipherment of the obstacles faced in efforts to empower coastal communities previously led us to the solution to the problem, namely improving the economy of fishing communities and empowering and increasing the involvement of the government and legislature as a policymaker to help the community through the realization of regulations. Coastal communities with the label of poor people need support from government programs. Even during the Covid-19 Pandemic, limited access has also caused fish prices to drop drastically, so efforts for fish produced by fishermen can be marketed normally are very necessary. The community's economic empowerment is very dependent on the policies launched by the government. In West Aceh Regency, empowerment efforts can be carried out based on the researcher's proposal on the views of Mardikunto and Poerwoko ([Mardikanto T and Poerwoko, 2012](#)), which include the following:

Better Education

Empowerment should be designed as a better form of education. The improvement of education carried out through empowerment is not only limited to improvement through formal education for fishermen to improve the quality of education among fishermen, but it can also be in the form of improvements in non-formal education, especially related to methods such as: First, providing education to fishing communities about good business financial management, as well as families so that fishermen's daily income or assistance funds from the government can be used wisely, effectively and efficiently to overcome the economic problems faced related to financial management that is still lacking. Second, conduct training in the form of education and practice for fishermen on the correct methods or procedures for catching fish, both in the form of fishing education based on fish quality, not depending on quantity. This certainly impacts maintaining marine ecosystems by not catching fish on a large scale and increasing profits for fishermen. It cannot be denied that so far, the fishermen in Johan Pahlawan District have caught fish with a target of large numbers or did not see fish based on their quality, which is also the cause of the low selling price of fish.

Better Accessibility

Empowerment policies for coastal communities during the Covid-19 pandemic, for now, require new innovations related to accessibility in order to improve the economy of fishing communities optimally. Marketing access is the main thing that needs to be improved. Previously, it was explained that the prices received by fishermen were low due to the narrow

marketing both during the pandemic and pre-pandemic. So, the government should be able to facilitate the accessibility of the marketing of fishermen's catches through market expansion efforts. Regarding other access, cooperative institutions are the main access to the interaction between fishermen because they are a forum that facilitates good fishermen's activities; thus, special attention to improving accessibility in cooperative institutions is needed. This can be done after the government provides cooperatives, where cooperatives must be appropriately managed so that they can contribute greatly to the improvement of the economic quality of fishermen. One of them is to become an institution that provides facilities and infrastructure to support fishermen's activities. Both learning facilities and marketing facilities, as well as providing business capital for fishermen in the form of business capital loans in the form of goods instead of money with the intention that there is no misuse of capital assistance by fishermen. The cooperative must provide services and assistance involving all lines of the fishing community with the overall representation of fishermen. Strengthening solidarity between cooperative members is also necessary so that cooperative institutions can provide positive benefits for fishing communities directly and indirectly in facilitating various accesses.

Better Action

Coastal communities have limited knowledge. The knowledge gained by coastal communities in Johan Pahlawan District to catch fish is hereditary. It is, therefore, sophisticated fishing gear that has become a very new thing. Improving the economy of coastal communities in Johan Pahlawan District needs coaching actions from the government as an improvement in actions in improving human resources and especially creating fishermen who are reliable in catching fish both in terms of quality and quantity. Management actions and financial management improvements followed this because the fishing community did not pay attention to this. Improvements must also be supported by the government, one of which is by providing facilities that support improvements such as the modernization of fishing gear, marketing and technology-based fish management in Johan Pahlawan. In addition, the government also needs to provide freezers for fish storage to anticipate losses because the stability of fish prices often changes. Through the provision of these facilities, the market prices received by fishermen can also be more consistent every month, and fishermen's economic conditions become more stable.

Better institution

The government has implemented activities to improve fishermen's institutions in Johan Pahlawan District, such as opening a cooperation network. However, this has not been an effective solution due to the unilateral nature of the government in confirming various decisions. So a participatory aspect is needed. It involves the Commander-in-Chief of *Laot* and other partners, such as the Fishermen's Association, to effectively map the problems faced by fishing communities. Solid institutions can positively impact the development of various government programs in a more targeted manner and a wider network of partnership efforts. This can create a strong bargaining position in the community through appropriate institutional improvement because the fishing institution or community is very important. The view [Zal \(2016\)](#) also supports the importance of an institution where community ties and partnerships with other parties are very necessary and must be carried out consistently because cooperation between smallholder fishermen and elite fishermen and other partners can boost the standard of living of coastal communities categorized as poor.

As a form of institutional or fishing community ties, the awareness of cooperation with fishermen in West Aceh Regency is still lacking, so fishermen's institutions at the research site still look weak. Efforts are needed to attract the interest of the fishing community to be involved and feel the positive impact of the existence of cooperatives. This can be achieved by forming

a trusted cooperative institution and becoming a facilitator related to the facilities and infrastructure needed by fishermen. Commitment and the programs that are planned must be friendly to the economic conditions of fishermen. Cooperatives can act as an extension of fishermen in the consumer market so that losses due to middlemen can be minimized. This is in accordance with Andy's view of Cahaya (2015) that strong institutions can be a forum for empowering fishermen. Strong institutions do not have to come from outside the area but better from institutions that have come from within the fishing community itself.

E. CONCLUSION

Efforts to empower coastal communities, which work as fishermen, especially those with lower to the middle economy, are very necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because the pandemic makes the standard of living of fishermen very unsustainable. The government's empowerment efforts have not had the positive impact needed by the community. This is because the majority of fishing communities still live in poverty. This indicates that empowerment efforts have experienced implementation failure due to various implementation constraints, namely external constraints such as insufficient resources, inappropriate policy implementation methods, other public problems that affect policies, failures of government efforts to maintain price stability, marketing limitations, and external constraints in the form of government regulation against the fishermen, the inability of fishermen in business management, the different hierarchy of fishermen's income, to the length of the marketing chain. Therefore, policy implementation experiences an implementation gap because the policy has not had an impact on the needs of fishermen (bad policy), lack of participation and refocusing the budget (bad execution), so the policy has bad luck.

Looking at these problems, efforts to improve through empowerment must be launched again. So far, the government has only focused on providing financial assistance due to Covid-19. In fact, the community also needs other prolonged improvement solutions such as better education, namely improving formal and non-formal education, better accessibility by striving for the establishment of cooperatives as access to providers of facilities and infrastructure, better action through education so that fishermen are reliable in their fields, as well as better institutions such as collaborating with partners, and strengthening the role of cooperatives by cooperating with the government so that forming strong community bonds as the key to fixing the problems faced by fishermen.

The advice given in this study is that it is hoped that efforts to improve the empowerment constraints outlined can be realized immediately. So that the empowerment program carried out by the government can be more optimal, on target and in accordance with the needs of fishermen so that poverty in coastal communities can be improved and the welfare through improving the economy of fishing communities can be realized in the future.

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