



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF FISHING COMMUNITIES IN DORARI ISA VILLAGE, HIRI ISLAND

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the social dynamics and economic dynamics of the fishing community in Dorari Isa Village, Hiri Island District. The method used is descriptive qualitative. The research subjects were local fishing communities consisting of individual fishermen, labor fishermen (crew members), and patron fishermen, selected using a random sampling technique. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques employed data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the social dynamics of the fishing community are evident in the aspect of occupation, where fishing is the primary occupation; however, they have alternative jobs as farm laborers in the clove, coconut, and nutmeg plantation sectors. The majority of fishermen have elementary and junior high school education levels due to low family economic conditions. Economically, the fishing community requires capital to develop their business. Minimal capital affects the production process, the purchase of fishing gear, and hinders their work process of going to sea. Fishermen's income remains relatively low with inadequate equipment, so that income is often not proportional to expenses. The types of fish caught include tuna, skipjack tuna, goroba, sorihi, mackerel tuna, and dolosi at various prices. In conclusion, the socio-economic dynamics of the fishing community in Dorari Isa Village still face challenges in terms of education levels, capital limitations, and low income.

Keywords: Social Dynamics, Economy, Fishing Community, Hiri Island.

A. Introduction

Indonesia is known as the largest maritime country in the world, with a sea area far exceeding its land area. With a coastline stretching over 81,000 km, Indonesia ranks second after Canada as the country with the longest coastline in the world (Amalia, 2022). This immense

marine potential should serve as the primary capital for the welfare of coastal communities, particularly fishermen. However, the reality on the ground shows that most Indonesian fishermen still live in structural poverty. Sebenan (2007) revealed that the characteristics of fishing communities are shaped by the dynamic nature of the resources they exploit, so that to obtain maximum catches, fishermen often have to move from one location to another. Furthermore, the high business risks cause fishing communities to live in a harsh natural environment, constantly facing uncertainty in their livelihoods.

Based on the status of capital ownership, fishing communities are categorized into three groups: patron fishermen (owners of fishing gear and vessels), labor fishermen or crew members (ABK) who sell their labor, and individual fishermen who operate alone with simple equipment (Sastria, 2002). Mubiyarto (2012) added that the welfare level of fishermen is largely determined by their catches, which directly affect their income. This income is used to meet household consumption needs, pay debts, purchase fishing gear, cover operational costs, and even fund children's education (Richad et al., 2022). However, fishermen's income does not come solely from fishing activities but also from other economic activities as side jobs to fill their spare time.

Although various studies have been conducted on poverty and economic uncertainty among fishermen in various regions of Indonesia, there remains a research gap regarding the socio-economic dynamics of fishing communities on small islands, particularly in North Maluku Province. Most previous studies have focused more on the economic aspects of fishery productivity or government policies, while studies that integrate social aspects (education, health, social interaction, housing conditions) and economic aspects (capital, income, profit-sharing systems, savings) simultaneously within fishing communities on small islands remain limited. Emerson (1980) stated that various studies on fishermen's lives generally emphasize poverty and economic uncertainty, but few have specifically explored the dynamics of socio-economic change among fishing communities over a certain period and their adaptation strategies to seasonal and weather uncertainties. Specifically for the Hiri Island area, no previous research has comprehensively analyzed the socio-economic dynamics of fishermen in Dorari Isa Village.

Based on the researcher's initial observations in April 2024, Dorari Isa Village has three groups of fishermen with different characteristics: patron fishermen, labor fishermen (crew members), and individual fishermen. Fishing activities are carried out using fiberglass boats, with the main commodities being tuna and skipjack tuna. The marketing of catches is partly done directly to the market, while others are sold through intermediary traders as far as Ternate Island. Preliminary data shows that in 2021-2022, fishermen's income reached IDR 100,000,000 per month for the group, but in 2023-2024, income dropped drastically to only about IDR 50,000,000 per month due to prolonged wave seasons. This condition caused individual labor fishermen's income to only reach around IDR 1,666,000 to IDR 2,000,000 per month, far below the decent living standard. These problems indicate significant socio-economic pressure on the local fishing community.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach that combines the analysis of social dynamics (including education level, number of family members, access to healthcare, social interaction, housing conditions and status) and economic dynamics (including types of fishing gear, types of fish, fish prices, fishing seasons, fishing activities, profit-sharing systems, capital, income, and savings) within a single research framework on fishing communities in small islands that are still rarely touched by development. This research is also the first to be conducted in Dorari Isa Village, Hiri Island District, thereby generating baseline data that was previously unavailable. Furthermore, this study specifically addresses the biggest challenges faced by fishermen (bad weather, damaged gear and engines), as well as social conflicts and the solutions hoped for by the community. Thus, this research not only describes the existing conditions but also provides concrete recommendations for policymakers. Based on the above description, the researcher considers it important to conduct a more in-depth study entitled: "Socio-Economic Dynamics of Fishing Communities in Dorari Isa Village, Hiri Island District."

B. Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because the researcher aimed to describe in detail the socio-economic dynamics of the fishing community in Dorari Isa Village, Hiri Island District. According to Moleong (2013), qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from subjects and observable behavior. This design allows the researcher to

understand and interpret social phenomena holistically and contextually based on the perspectives of the fishing community as the primary subjects. The research did not aim to generalize findings to a larger population but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the specific conditions, challenges, and adaptations of the fishing community in the research location.

2. Instruments

The main instruments used were observation guidelines, open-ended interview guidelines (questionnaire), and documentation tools. The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions developed from four parameters: social aspects (7 questions), economic aspects (19 questions), challenges and problems (2 questions), and solutions and expectations (2 questions). Observation sheets and photographs were also used to validate field data.

3. Technique of Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of three concurrent components:

1. Data Reduction: Selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data from interviews, observation, and documentation.
2. Data Display: Presenting data in the form of narrative text, tables (e.g., respondent profiles), and figures (e.g., photos of boats and fishing gear).
3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Interpreting findings to answer the research questions, ensuring conclusions were supported by valid field evidence.

The analysis process included transcription, coding, interpretation, synthesis, and final conclusion formulation in a systematic narrative.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

1) Social Dynamics – Education, Family, and Health

The social dynamics of the fishing community in Dorari Isa Village are reflected in several key aspects. Regarding education, the majority of fishermen have low educational backgrounds. Four out of five respondents completed only elementary school (SD), while one respondent completed junior high school (SMP). The low education level is caused by poor family economic conditions, which prevent children from pursuing higher education. In terms of family size, most fishermen have three to six family members, including wife and children. All fishermen reported that their children attend school, hoping to gain better skills and change their future. Regarding healthcare access, all respondents confirmed they utilize the national health insurance (BPJS) to access health services at the local health center or hospital without additional costs.

2) Social Dynamics – Interaction and Housing Conditions

Social interaction among fishermen is strong and active. Respondents stated that they frequently interact with fellow fishermen to share information about weather conditions, clean and repair damaged fishing nets together, motivate each other regarding fishing techniques, and discuss fish marketing strategies. Regarding housing conditions, four respondents live in permanent houses with zinc roofs, concrete/brick walls, and ceramic tile floors. One respondent lives in a semi-permanent house with a zinc roof, concrete walls, and a cement floor. All five respondents confirmed that their houses are self-owned properties, indicating a sense of residential security despite economic limitations.

3) Economic Dynamics – Fishing Gear, Fish Types, and Prices

The economic dynamics of the fishing community show significant variation. In terms of fishing gear, labor fishermen and patron fishermen use nets (jaring), while individual fishermen use hand lines (mata kail). The types of fish caught include tuna, skipjack tuna (cakalang), goroba, sorihi, mackerel tuna (tongkol), and dolosi. Fish prices vary: tuna ranges from IDR 25,000 to 35,000 per kg, skipjack tuna from IDR 15,000 to 25,000 per kg, sorihi from IDR 17,000 to 20,000 per kg, and tongkol from IDR 10,000 to 17,000 per kg. The peak fishing seasons occur in February, May, June, July, November, and December. Fishing activities typically start at 4:00 AM and end at 4:00 PM. Fishing frequency varies: some fishermen go to sea once a week, others six times per month, and some up to ten times per month.

4) Economic Dynamics – Capital, Profit Sharing, and Income

Regarding capital, individual fishermen require IDR 1,000,000 to 1,200,000 for operational costs, while the patron fisherman needs approximately IDR 5,000,000. Labor fishermen (ABK) do not provide capital as it is fully supplied by the patron. The profit-sharing system between patron

and labor fishermen follows a 70:30 ratio, where the patron receives 70% and labor fishermen receive 30% after deducting operational costs. For example, from IDR 100,000,000 in fish sales with IDR 5,000,000 operational costs, the remaining IDR 95,000,000 is divided: IDR 30,000,000 (30%) for the patron and IDR 65,000,000 (70%) distributed among 20 crew members, each receiving approximately IDR 2,000,000 to 3,000,000. Individual fishermen earn between IDR 2,000,000 and 8,000,000 per month. Monthly child education expenses range from IDR 150,000 to 1,500,000. Regarding savings, three respondents have savings for family needs and boat repairs, while two respondents have no savings due to high daily household expenses.

Challenges, Problems, and Future Expectations.

The biggest challenges faced by fishermen include bad weather (high waves and strong winds), damaged nets, and broken engines. During bad weather, fishermen cannot go to sea because of safety risks such as unstable boats and potential accidents. This condition leads to reduced catches and lower income. Regarding social conflict, respondents reported no conflicts among fishermen, as they work in different fishing grounds and maintain strong social bonds based on mutual assistance. For the future, fishermen hope to receive government assistance in the form of fiberglass boats, fishing nets, and boat engines to expand their business, increase catches, and improve income. All respondents expressed the hope for a better family economy to meet daily needs and provide a better life for their families.

2. Discussion

The finding that the majority of fishermen in Dorari Isa Village have only elementary or junior high school education reflects a structural barrier that perpetuates poverty and limits livelihood diversification. This finding is strongly consistent with Fatwa (2016), who studied the education dynamics of fishing communities in Pandangan Wetan Village, Rembang. Fatwa (2016) found that fishermen's families generally had low commitment to education due to authoritarian or permissive parenting styles, where parents forced their will in certain areas such as education. Many parents believed that formal education was unimportant because even without higher education, children could still earn money as fishermen. This pattern is identical to Dorari Isa, where low education is caused by poor family economic conditions. Amalia (2022) reinforced this by stating that low educational attainment among fishing communities in Indonesia restricts their ability to access better economic opportunities and alternative employment. Lamia (2013) further emphasized that education level directly correlates with mastery of fishing techniques and the ability to diversify income sources, which is clearly absent in the Dorari Isa fishing community. Consequently, an intergenerational cycle of poverty is created where children follow their parents' footsteps as fishermen due to the absence of other viable options.

Pelu and Christianty (2022), in their study of coastal fishing communities around the tourism area in Morella Village, Leihitu District, found that low education levels among fishermen resulted in the continued use of traditional fishing technology, which in turn affected fishermen's welfare levels. The researchers concluded that without access to modern technology and knowledge, fishermen remain trapped in subsistence-level production. This finding directly parallels the situation in Dorari Isa, where fishermen primarily use simple nets and hand lines, with limited capacity to upgrade their equipment. Kusnadi (2000) emphasized that the low quality of human resources in fishing communities is primarily caused by limited access to formal education due to economic constraints. The lack of formal education prevents fishermen from adopting improved fishing technologies, accessing financial services, or negotiating better fish prices. In Dorari Isa, the patron fishermen who have higher capital also have relatively better education, while labor fishermen with minimal education remain entirely dependent on patrons, illustrating the nexus between education, technology, and economic status.

Despite economic limitations, the strong social interaction and mutual cooperation observed among fishermen in Dorari Isa represent valuable social capital. Hidayati and Pandjaitan (2020) studied group dynamics in fishing community resilience in Bangsring Village, Banyuwangi, when facing marine ecosystem damage. They found that group communication and group cohesion enabled collective action to overcome various problems. The researchers concluded that fishing communities demonstrated resilience in social, economic, and infrastructure components when facing marine ecosystem damage. In Dorari Isa, fishermen actively share weather information, repair nets together, discuss marketing strategies, and maintain strong social bonds, demonstrating collective action patterns similar to Bangsring Village. Fargomeli (2014) confirmed that fishing communities develop deep interaction patterns based on cooperation in carrying out activities and maintaining social contact both among fishermen and with other community members, with clear objectives carried out through

permanent systems in accordance with fishing community culture. Rasak (2014) added that social interaction in fishing communities is characterized by strong kinship and solidarity, where differences are resolved through deliberation and consensus.

The profit-sharing system (70% for patron, 30% for labor fishermen after operational costs) documented in this study represents a classic patron-client relationship that perpetuates economic dependency. De Porres (2021), in his study of Wuring Village on the north coast of Flores, explicitly addressed this phenomenon. He found that the introduction of modern fishing gear during the New Order era caused concentration of production means ownership, which subsequently gave rise to patron-client relations, debt problems, and children dropping out of school. De Porres (2021) also documented that fishermen's resistance to poverty appeared in negative forms such as drunkenness, brawls, and attempts at upward social mobility by becoming campaign workers in local elections. In Dorari Isa, labor fishermen (ABK) provide only their labor and skills, while the patron supplies all capital including boats, engines, and fishing gear. Sastria (2002) categorized fishermen based on capital ownership into three groups: patron fishermen (owners of production means), labor fishermen (who sell their labor), and individual fishermen (who operate alone with simple equipment). Kusnadi (2000) explained that the patron-client relationship is characterized by a paternalistic bond where patrons provide production facilities and daily necessities, while clients provide labor and loyalty.

The finding that bad weather and prolonged wave seasons significantly reduce fishing frequency and income reflects the broader vulnerability of small-scale fishermen to climate change. Hidayati and Pandjaitan (2020) studied how fishing communities in Bangsring Village adapted to marine ecosystem damage caused by natural disasters and environmental degradation. They found that fishermen demonstrated resilience through group dynamics, particularly group communication and cohesion, enabling collective action to overcome environmental challenges. However, in Dorari Isa, such structured adaptive capacity is lacking. Sebenan (2007) noted that the high business risk causes fishing communities to live in a harsh natural environment constantly filled with uncertainty in running their business. The Dorari Isa fishermen's experience of income dropping from IDR 100 million to IDR 50 million per group during bad weather seasons exemplifies this climate vulnerability. Rahim (2012) identified that factors affecting fishermen's income include physical factors (coastal environmental conditions, fishing technology, fishing location, and capital) and non-physical factors (climate conditions, seasons, age, education, and fishing experience).

Rahayu, Jayusman, and Romadi (2017), in their study of socio-economic dynamics of fishermen in Sirnobojo Village, Pacitan (1998-2014), found that fishermen experienced many changes, especially in their socio-economic life, as various government programs entered the village. However, they also noted that seasonal fluctuations remained a persistent challenge that government programs could not fully eliminate. The peak fishing seasons in Sirnobojo were marked by abundant catches, while lean seasons caused significant income reduction. This pattern is identical to Dorari Isa, where peak seasons occur in February, May, June, July, November, and December, with fishermen going to sea from 4:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Mubiyarto (2012) confirmed that the welfare level of fishermen is largely determined by their catches, which directly affect their income. During the lean season caused by extreme weather, fishermen in Dorari Isa cannot go to sea at all, resulting in zero income. This income instability has cascading effects on household consumption, children's education funding, and savings capacity. Rahim (2012) emphasized that without income stabilization mechanisms, fishermen remain perpetually vulnerable to seasonal shocks.

The finding that most fishermen own permanent or semi-permanent houses suggests modest asset ownership with variation between patron and labor fishermen. Rahayu, Jayusman, and Romadi (2017) found that in Sirnobojo Village, as government programs entered the village, improvements in housing conditions and infrastructure became visible over time. However, improvements were not evenly distributed, with patron fishermen benefiting more than labor fishermen. In Dorari Isa, four respondents live in permanent homes with ceramic tile floors, while one resides in a semi-permanent dwelling with cement flooring. This variation reflects the economic stratification within the fishing community itself. Ahmadi and Abu (2007) stated that housing conditions are one of the key indicators of family welfare, where permanent housing generally correlates with more stable economic conditions. Dewi et al. (2018) added that fishing communities exhibit clear social stratification based on capital ownership, which is reflected in housing quality. The fact that all fishermen own their homes (none rent) indicates a degree of residential security despite income instability, but the semi-permanent housing of labor fishermen highlights their ongoing vulnerability.

The finding that fishermen in Dorari Isa use simple nets and hand lines reflects limited technological adoption. De Porres (2021) documented that the introduction of modern fishing gear in Wuring Village during the New Order era led to both positive (increased catches) and negative (concentration of ownership, patron-client relations) consequences. In Dorari Isa, modernization has not yet occurred, leaving fishermen with traditional, low-productivity equipment. Pelu and Christianty (2022) found that in Morella Village, fishermen continued using traditional technology due to low education levels and limited capital access. The researchers concluded that without technology upgrading, fishermen cannot increase their catches or income. Kusnadi (2000) noted that traditional fishing gear is highly dependent on seasonal and weather conditions, making catches unpredictable. In Dorari Isa, the patron fisherman has a fiberglass boat with a 15 PK engine, representing the highest level of technology in the community. Labor fishermen and individual fishermen operate with lower levels of technology, limiting their fishing range and catch volume. This technological stratification reinforces economic inequality within the fishing community.

The finding that no social conflicts exist among fishermen in Dorari Isa suggests strong community cohesion. This finding aligns with Hidayati and Pandjaitan (2020), who found that fishing communities in Bangsring demonstrated resilience supported by group dynamics, especially group communication and cohesion, which enabled collective action to address various problems. Rahayu, Jayusman, and Romadi (2017) also noted that government programs and community self-initiatives in Sirnobojo received appreciation from central government, leading to increased attention to improving fishermen's welfare. However, De Porres (2021) offered a contrasting perspective, documenting that in Wuring Village, resistance from poor fishermen appeared in negative forms such as drunkenness and brawls, indicating that strong social cohesion is not guaranteed in all fishing communities. De Porres (2021) attributed this to the concentration of capital ownership and the emergence of patron-client relations that marginalized labor fishermen. In Dorari Isa, the absence of overt conflict may be due to the relatively small community size (only 5 respondents from a small village) and the strong kinship bonds that characterize small-island societies. However, the risk remains that as fish stocks decline or weather patterns become more unpredictable, current social harmony may erode without formal conflict resolution mechanisms.

The findings have significant implications for policy intervention, and the relevant studies offer comparative insights for action. Rahayu, Jayusman, and Romadi (2017) concluded that with enormous marine resources, awareness must be built among fishing communities about the importance of utilizing available resources for collective welfare. They emphasized that government programs should be sustained and expanded to achieve lasting improvements. Pelu and Christianty (2022) recommended that tourism management in coastal areas should not be individually owned but should involve good cooperation between owners and local government, as poor management perpetuates inequality. For fishing communities specifically, they suggested that cooperatives could help fishermen access better markets. Fatwa (2016) recommended that parenting patterns in fishing families need to shift from authoritarian/permissive to more authoritative to improve children's education outcomes, breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Hidayati and Pandjaitan (2020) demonstrated that group dynamics interventions (strengthening communication and cohesion) can build community resilience to environmental shocks. De Porres (2021) emphasized that addressing patron-client dependency requires structural interventions including access to formal capital, financial literacy training, and legal protection for labor fishermen.

Based on these comparative findings, for Dorari Isa, priority interventions should include: (1) improving access to formal capital to reduce patron dependency (De Porres, 2021; Sastria, 2002); (2) providing climate-resilient fishing gear and technology upgrading (Hidayati & Pandjaitan, 2020; Pelu & Christianty, 2022); (3) establishing cooperative marketing channels to eliminate intermediary exploitation (Rahayu, Jayusman & Romadi, 2017); (4) offering skills training for livelihood diversification (Amalia, 2022; Fatwa, 2016); and (5) strengthening group dynamics and community organization capacity (Hidayati & Pandjaitan, 2020; Fargomeli, 2014). Future research should examine the effectiveness of group-dynamics-based interventions in building resilience among Dorari Isa fishermen, following the model successfully documented by Hidayati and Pandjaitan (2020) in Bangsring Village.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the social dynamics of the fishing community in Dorari Isa Village are characterized by low education levels (predominantly elementary and junior high school),

strong social interaction and mutual cooperation among fishermen, adequate access to healthcare through BPJS, and varying housing conditions ranging from permanent to semi-permanent, all of which are self-owned. The low education level is primarily caused by poor family economic conditions, which aligns with the findings of Fatwa (2016) and Pelu & Christianty (2022), who similarly identified that limited educational attainment perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of poverty among fishing communities. Additionally, social capital in the form of mutual cooperation and group cohesion serves as a coping mechanism for daily challenges, consistent with Hidayati & Pandjaitan (2020) and Fargomeli (2014), who emphasized the importance of group dynamics in building community resilience. However, this social capital alone is insufficient to overcome structural economic barriers without external institutional support.

The economic dynamics reveal that fishermen in Dorari Isa face significant challenges including limited capital, dependence on a patron-client profit-sharing system (70:30 ratio favoring the patron), low and unstable income averaging only IDR 2,000,000 per month for labor fishermen, vulnerability to bad weather and seasonal fluctuations, and limited savings capacity. These findings are consistent with De Porres (2021), who documented that patron-client relationships in fishing communities perpetuate economic dependency and debt problems, and with Rahayu, Jayusman & Romadi (2017), who noted that seasonal fluctuations remain a persistent challenge despite government programs. The study also found that fishermen urgently need government assistance in the form of fiberglass boats, fishing nets, and engines to expand their business, increase catches, and improve income. Therefore, priority policy interventions should include improving access to formal capital to reduce patron dependency, providing climate-resilient fishing gear, establishing cooperative marketing channels to eliminate intermediaries, offering skills training for livelihood diversification, and strengthening group dynamics to build long-term community resilience.

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