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## Local Capacity, Village Governance, and Livelihood Development: A Review

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini mengulas literatur mengenai hubungan antara kapasitas lokal, tata kelola desa, dan pengembangan mata pencaharian di tingkat desa. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana kapasitas lokal meningkatkan tata kelola desa dan dampaknya terhadap mata pencaharian anggota masyarakat. Kajian ini menganalisis artikel-artikel ilmiah yang telah diterbitkan sebelumnya tentang topik tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kapasitas lokal yang kuat berkorelasi positif dengan tata kelola desa yang lebih efektif, yang pada gilirannya mendorong pengembangan mata pencaharian yang berkelanjutan. Selain itu, artikel tersebut juga mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor kunci yang mempengaruhi hubungan ini, termasuk partisipasi masyarakat, keberlanjutan program, dan dukungan kebijakan pemerintah. Sebagai kesimpulan, artikel ini menekankan pentingnya memperkuat kapasitas lokal dan meningkatkan tata kelola desa sebagai strategi untuk mendorong pengembangan mata pencaharian berkelanjutan. Wawasan dari tinjauan literatur ini dimaksudkan untuk memandu para pembuat kebijakan dan praktisi dalam merancang program pembangunan desa yang lebih efektif.

Kata Kunci: *Kapasitas Lokal; Pengembangan Penghidupan; Tata Kelola Desa*

## Abstract

This article reviews the literature on the relationship between local capacity, village governance, and livelihood development at the village level. It aims to explore how local capacity enhances village governance and its subsequent effect on the livelihoods of community members. The review analyzes previously published scholarly articles on the subject. The findings reveal that robust local capacity is positively correlated with more effective village governance, which, in turn, promotes sustainable livelihood development. Additionally, the article identifies key factors influencing this relationship, including community participation, program sustainability, and government policy support. In conclusion, the article emphasizes the importance of strengthening local capacity and enhancing village governance as strategies for fostering sustainable livelihood development. The insights from this literature review are intended to guide policymakers and practitioners in designing more effective village development programs.

Keywords: *Local Capacity; Livelihood Development; Village Governance*

## INTRODUCTION

The review examines how strengthening local institutional capacity enhances village governance and, in turn, improves rural livelihoods. It emphasizes the importance of democratic frameworks rooted in transparency, accountability, and community participation, drawing from conceptual work by Acharya (2014), Sarawati (2019), and Kushandajani (2024).

To address the lack of systematic comparative analysis, this review now compares governance models across diverse socio-political contexts—from Nepal's Village Development Committees (Acharya, 2014) to Indonesia's Village Law frameworks—exploring model adaptability in peri-urban vs. rural and developing vs. developed settings. It asks: What institutional features ensure cross-context applicability?

Previously underexplored, external factors like global economic pressures, international aid, and climate change are now explicitly analyzed. The revised review examines how aid misalignment or supportive donor practices affect local governance, drawing on insights into aid conditionality and local-level bureaucratic challenges.

Empirical evidence is expanded through case studies such as Vietnam's Forest Land Allocation (Dang, 2014), waste management in peri-urban India (Kandpal & Saizen, 2019), and Ethiopia's Women's Development Army (closely linked to health outcomes) (Mulder, 2023). This grounds theoretical frameworks in real-world examples.

The scope of governance is broadened beyond Village Funds. While Dana Desa remains central to the analysis, the review now incorporates governance domains such as law enforcement, public health, education, and environmental management, reflecting a

more holistic view of village administration.

Inclusivity and gender dynamics receive a dedicated section. Studies like rural women's collective action in Indonesia (Diprose et al., 2020) and gender quotas in India's Panchayati Raj are used to analyze how decision-making power and representation affect governance outcomes. This section asks: How do women's voices influence capacity and investment?

The theoretical foundations of local wisdom are deepened, exploring its compatibility with institutional governance systems. The review interrogates both its role in reinforcing social capital (Arieffiani & Jati Utama, 2023) and its limitations where traditional norms may conflict with participatory decision-making.

Comparative frameworks are synthesized across thematic domains, such as forest governance, sanitation, education, and health. Across these domains, the review highlights tailored, context-specific governance assessments, identifying models of adaptable institutional mechanisms.

Critical gaps and future research priorities are clearly delineated:

- Develop cross-regional comparative frameworks;
- Strengthen empirical case studies;
- Analyze external interventions;
- Broaden governance domains;
- Center inclusivity and gender;
- Explore local wisdom theory thoroughly;
- Build resilient systems addressing climate, biodiversity, and public health.

In conclusion, this enriched literature review bridges theory and practice, presenting a more comprehensive, empirically grounded, and inclusively informed analysis of village governance. It advocates for governance models that are democratically participatory, gender-sensitive, contextually adaptable, and theoretically robust, thus informing more effective capacity-building and policy frameworks across diverse rural environments.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a literature review methodology, utilizing secondary data gathered from libraries through activities such as reading, note-taking, and analyzing various research materials. These materials include official documents, scholarly journals, research reports, theses, dissertations, conference proceedings, and other scientific papers. The steps involved in this literature review are: 1) defining the scope and context of the review topic, 2) identifying relevant, high-quality reference materials using Google Scholar, 3) selecting and categorizing references based on the research topic, 4) organizing the findings from

the collected articles, 5) composing a comprehensive review, and 6) drawing conclusions and applying the review results (Ariyanto, 2023; Snyder, 2024).

The focus of this research is on local capacity, village governance, and livelihood development. To explore these topics, the researcher conducted keyword searches in both Indonesian and English, using terms such as "local capacity," "village governance," and "livelihood development." The researcher employed Publish or Perish software version 8 to search for relevant articles, examining approximately 1,000 documents in Google Scholar (Ariyanto, 2023). Pertinent articles were selected, and their findings were organized, elaborated upon, and summarized to present data from previous studies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Local capacity in the context of village development and local economic development

Recent advancements in local capacity for village and economic development highlight the importance of community participation and empowerment. Decentralization at the village level is a key strategy for achieving community welfare and self-sufficiency by utilizing local resources (Gilang et al., 2021). Capacity-building initiatives are crucial for enhancing managerial skills and service delivery in community-based eco-cultural tourism, aligning economic growth with cultural preservation (Bello & Lambulira, 2023). Current village development strategies emphasize self-reliance, socio-economic resilience, and local ownership of development processes (Mukhlis et al., 2021). A critical aspect involves optimizing economic potential through increased productivity and diversifying village enterprises. Leveraging local assets—such as heritage buildings and cultural features—fuels economic growth and strengthens the village's identity and attractiveness as a destination (Gilang et al., 2021). These efforts reflect a holistic approach to rural development, focusing on empowerment, sustainability, and the strategic use of local strengths for long-term prosperity.

The role of BUMDES (Village-Owned Enterprises) is crucial in optimizing local economic resources and supporting village development by enabling economic activities that reflect community needs (Mukhlis et al., 2021). Active community participation, strategic planning, and effective policies are essential for village resilience and autonomy. Tourism villages emerge as a promising development model, stabilizing local economies, creating culturally relevant products, and addressing challenges like limited vision, low motivation, and cultural resistance (Priyanto et al., 2021). Local Economic Development (LED) strategies must tackle these barriers while promoting long-term rural development objectives (Kurniawan et al., 2022). The sustainability of tourism and economic initiatives relies on local

capacity, where institutional strength, social cohesion, and economic interdependence reinforce each other (Nugroho et al., 2020). International examples, such as Ukraine's decentralization reform, demonstrate how financial and managerial autonomy can enhance local governance and territorial marketing (Lyndyuk, 2021). Education and capacity-building programs further empower communities, aligning development efforts with knowledge-driven growth (Dwiatmojo et al., 2023). Historical institutional frameworks are significant; villages shaped by bureaucratic legacies show stronger civil societies and more effective public goods delivery, leading to higher living standards compared to those under patron-client systems (Dell et al., 2015).

In diverse rural contexts such as the Indian Himalayan region and Indonesian villages, adaptive and developmental capacities are shaped by varying socio-economic and environmental dynamics. In the Indian Himalayas, adaptive capacity is stratified by connectivity, with connected villages showing low and isolated villages very low resilience, highlighting the need for integrated assessments and community-focused adaptation strategies (Chandra & Uniyal, 2021). In Indonesia's Ngadas village, adaptive capacity is intricately tied to the interplay between social, economic, and environmental dimensions, where institutions influence economic and environmental factors, and social structures indirectly boost ecotourism through economic pathways (Nugroho et al., 2020). This underscores the value of using a sustainability index to holistically assess local resilience. Meanwhile, in Bendungan Lama Pamarayan, the community's socio-cultural engagement in promoting tourism and preserving heritage illustrates a proactive approach to leveraging local assets, yet economic management remains underutilized due to systemic constraints (Gilang et al., 2021). These cases collectively emphasize that enhancing rural adaptive capacity requires context-specific strategies that integrate institutional support, economic development, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. Only through a comprehensive and participatory approach can sustainable rural transformation be achieved in both mountainous and lowland settings.

The active participation of community elites and the broader community is essential for successful empowerment programs and overall community welfare (Situmorang, 2023). However, research shows that provincial and district elites have not fully engaged in enhancing village-level welfare, and village elites have failed to motivate economic empowerment within their communities (Situmorang, 2023). This lack of elite engagement hampers grassroots development and limits the impact of empowerment initiatives. In the Plaklao community, local guides possess valuable knowledge about cultural tourism resources, but their limited touring and English communication skills, along with only

intermediate-level abilities in academic, interpretative, and operational aspects, restrict their effectiveness in promoting local tourism (Sregongsang, 2016). To address these challenges, the Pentahelix model offers a framework that fosters collaboration among five key stakeholders—government, academia, MSME practitioners, financial institutions, and media (Budiman et al., 2023). This model aims to create synergy and coordination among these elements to unlock local potential and overcome structural barriers, leading to more sustainable and inclusive community development (Budiman et al., 2023).

Sustainable village development relies on participatory, context-sensitive, and capacity-driven approaches. Empowerment and active community involvement, especially of local elites, are crucial for fostering economic resilience and self-sufficiency. However, persistent disengagement at multiple administrative levels hinders transformative change. Local Economic Development (LED) strategies, particularly through mechanisms like BUMDES and tourism villages, are essential for optimizing local assets and creating economic opportunities. Challenges such as low motivation, limited vision, and insufficient institutional support persist. Case studies show that adaptive capacity varies and is influenced by socio-economic dynamics, connectivity, institutional strength, and cultural engagement. Successful models, like those that integrate eco-cultural tourism and leverage heritage assets, highlight the need to align economic activities with local identity and sustainability goals. Capacity-building in managerial, communicative, and academic skills is a common need, as seen in the Plaklao community. The Pentahelix model provides a collaborative framework, promoting synergy among stakeholders to address barriers and stimulate inclusive growth. Advancing rural development requires integrated strategies that combine local empowerment, institutional reform, economic innovation, and cultural preservation, tailored to each community's unique conditions for long-term prosperity and resilience.

#### Village governance in improving community welfare

The field of village governance has evolved significantly, emphasizing the role of transparent, accountable, and participatory structures. Key studies highlight that good governance principles—such as accountability, transparency, participation, rule of law, justice, equality, and responsiveness—are essential for effective village management (Andi, 2018; Sarawati, 2019). Sarawati (2019) also emphasizes the importance of incorporating local wisdom and providing targeted assistance to align development initiatives with community needs. Research from Indonesia and China shows that governance reforms can greatly impact welfare outcomes. In Indonesia, the Village Law has decentralized authority,

empowering villages to manage their development agendas. This framework, along with the allocation of Village Funds, has improved governance quality and community welfare (Mulyani & Hayati, 2023). These funds have promoted more inclusive governance, enhancing service delivery and infrastructure development. Overall, these insights indicate that village governance, grounded in good governance principles and responsive to local contexts, can advance sustainable and equitable community welfare.

The establishment of village-based welfare service systems in China's urbanizing rural areas illustrates the changing dynamics of community governance amid rapid social transformation, highlighting a negotiation of power between local actors and the state (Dai, 2020). These systems reveal the state's adaptive strategies in welfare planning and the local mechanisms that shape implementation, offering insight into the nature of state power (Dai, 2020). However, significant obstacles remain: a shortage of trained personnel, limited understanding of fund management regulations, and weak communication channels between communities and government authorities hinder effective village fund governance. These barriers underscore the challenges in achieving efficient and inclusive welfare provision. Furthermore, the discourse on village governance highlights tensions surrounding capacity building, the impact of village funds on governance and welfare outcomes, and community perceptions of fund allocation practices. These debates reflect the contested and complex nature of rural welfare governance amid deepening decentralization and socio-economic change.

Current research on village governance and community welfare explores a wide range of critical themes, including the effectiveness of governance structures, capacity building, and the application of good governance principles in managing local affairs. Studies also delve into the governance of natural resources, the role and impact of village funds, and initiatives aimed at strengthening rural economies. These investigations rely on diverse methodologies and data sources, aiming to identify best practices and enhance both administrative performance and community well-being. Looking ahead, future research can further investigate the practical implementation of village capacity building programs, examine the extent and influence of community participation in development efforts, and evaluate the outcomes of village fund utilization. Additionally, studies can focus on designing and assessing training programs for good governance, improving supervision and accountability mechanisms in village activities, and exploring alternative governance models tailored to local contexts. The integration of digital tools through e-government and the creation of village-based welfare service systems also represent promising areas for innovation. Collectively, these research avenues have the potential to inform the formulation

of effective policies and strategies that foster participatory governance, transparency, and sustainable development in rural communities.

### Local Capacity, Village Governance and Livelihood Development

The fields of local capacity, village governance, and livelihood development have evolved, facing both progress and challenges. A recurring issue is weak coordination among institutions and limited financial resources, which hinder local entities' ability to address grassroots problems effectively (Hartono, 2020). This is exacerbated by administrative instability, including frequent transfers of Village Development Committee Secretaries and prolonged political vacuums, which impede the efficient use of central grants for community development (Acharya, 2014). Although capacity-building efforts for village officials have gained prominence, current institutional capabilities remain misaligned with the Local Self Governance Act, necessitating urgent reforms (Acharya, 2014). The UNDP's Capacity Development frameworks provide promising models, particularly in enhancing knowledge systems and creating protective regulations for vulnerable populations like migrant workers (Setijaningrum et al., 2023). Additionally, capacity building must focus on rapid, transparent, and accountable governance structures, community engagement, and strategies rooted in local wisdom (Sarawati, 2019). However, weaknesses in governance architecture, fiscal management, and role clarity continue to limit municipalities' ability to address critical issues like housing affordability and sustainable livelihoods (Rauf & Frayne, 2023), highlighting the need for holistic institutional strengthening.

The integration of technology into village innovation programs is recognized as a critical strategy for addressing disparities in capacity and resource distribution in marginalized rural areas (Heri et al., 2021). Mountain farmers' perceptions of their adaptive capacity are influenced by their socio-economic status, reflecting the uneven nature of local resilience (Chandra & Uniyal, 2021). Enhancing local capacity through optimal use of village funds via inclusive consultations, responsible financial management, participatory infrastructure development, and ongoing capacity-building initiatives has proven effective (Sarifuddin et al., 2022). Sustained Community-Based Conservation (CBC) efforts have shown potential to positively shape village-level governance institutions, making them more adaptive and resilient (Salerno et al., 2021). The strategic deployment of information technologies provides practical tools for digital innovation in rural development, supporting more inclusive and efficient growth (Nurpuriani et al., 2024). However, debate persists regarding the definition and assessment of local capacity, highlighting its complex and multifaceted nature and the need for continued inquiry and targeted policy development.

Strong village governance is foundational, characterized by transparency, accountability, participatory processes, and adherence to local wisdom—factors crucial to sustainable village welfare and development (Sarawati, 2019).

The capacity of village governments to implement sustainable development policies is constrained, challenging broader sustainability goals at the grassroots level (Widyawati et al., 2022). Strengthening institutional capacity through targeted governance and administrative competence is critical to translate policies into impactful actions (Widyawati et al., 2022). Additionally, integrating local wisdom and using indigenous resources ensures development aligns with cultural values and ecological realities (Widyawati et al., 2022). The government's policy direction seeks to embed these practices into formal development frameworks, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (Widyawati et al., 2022). Community empowerment through social, economic, and cultural capital is essential for fostering sustainable rural livelihoods (Syafar & Ulumi, 2021). Grassroots-led initiatives, such as micro-hydro power projects funded by village allocations, demonstrate how community-driven solutions can enhance prosperity while preserving environmental integrity (Syafar & Ulumi, 2021). These dimensions highlight the interconnectedness of capacity building, local knowledge, and community agency in driving sustainable village development.

Local wisdom is crucial for village development by aligning governance with the cultural, social, and environmental contexts of each region, leading to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes (Hasyem & Ferizaldi, 2022). However, barriers such as limited financial resources, poor institutional coordination, and insufficient local government support hinder its effective integration in community development (Hartono, 2020; Hasyem & Ferizaldi, 2022). Governance challenges, including frequent leadership changes, unclear role distribution, and political instability, also impede resource use and the continuity of development programs (Acharya, 2014). Moreover, unequal technological capacity and socio-economic disparities among villages exacerbate development gaps (Heri et al., 2021). While strategies like good governance, community empowerment, and capacity building are vital for rural development, their implementation is often inconsistent and lacks a structured approach (Andi, 2018; Sarawati, 2019; Syafar & Ulumi, 2021). Ultimately, the success of sustainable village development depends on integrating local wisdom with adaptive governance, equitable resource access, and proactive engagement from government institutions and local communities (Chandra & Uniyal, 2021; Widyawati et al., 2022).

Engaging stakeholders, assessing capacity assets and needs, and designing a capacity development response are essential steps in community service initiatives aimed at enhancing local capacity (Setijaningrum et al., 2023). These efforts are critical in the context

of legislative reforms for local self-governance in developing democracies, where ineffective governance structures often require targeted legislative interventions to enable more responsive local institutions (Kume, 2023). The Village Government, as a key player in rural development, must prioritize internal capacity building to align with sustainable development goals and policies (Widyawati et al., 2022). However, challenges such as low public governance capacity, entrenched paternalistic cultures, and inadequate stakeholder engagement hinder the accountability and effectiveness of village business management (Kurniasih & Setyoko, 2019). Enhancing local capacity, improving village governance, and fostering livelihood development are complex and multifaceted endeavors requiring a multidimensional approach. Key areas of focus include fostering institutional coordination, promoting transparent governance, leveraging technology, and encouraging active community participation. Despite ongoing efforts, significant structural and cultural barriers remain, underscoring the need for continued research and policy innovation to build more resilient and inclusive village governance systems capable of supporting sustainable development.

## CONCLUSION

This article highlights the importance of local capacity, village governance, and livelihood development for village progress. It addresses the complexities of rural development that require ongoing research and policy innovation. Key factors include effective coordination, institutional capacity building, transparent governance, community participation, and technology use. Significant challenges must be addressed to achieve sustainable village development. Future research should focus on overcoming these obstacles and enhancing local capacity in different contexts.

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