

Implementation of the Community Empowerment Program in Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of the Community Empowerment Program in Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency. The implementation indicators include communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. The study employs a descriptive-qualitative approach. Key informants include district officials, while other informants comprise the program coordinator, village officials, and three community members. Purposive sampling was used to select community informants. Data collection involved both primary data (gathered through interviews) and secondary data (gathered through observation). Data analysis consisted of four simultaneous activities: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The study results indicate that the implementation of the Community Empowerment Program in Cikeusik District has not been optimal. Several implementation indicators face challenges, particularly regarding coordination, resources, and community engagement. Program communication has not reached all residents; outreach efforts tend to be limited and unstructured, resulting in many community members lacking a comprehensive understanding of the program.

Keywords: Implementation, Empowerment, Community

Introduction

Community empowerment is a crucial strategy in national development, oriented toward enhancing capacity, well-being, and quality of life through self-reliance. By developing local potential, this concept positions the community not merely as an object of development, but as an active subject steering the direction of change within its environment (Sutopo, 2024). Active participation across various spheres of life—economic, social, and cultural—is key to ensuring that the empowerment process is sustainable and yields significant long-term impacts on local community self-reliance (Jasmin et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the dynamics of the relationship between empowerment facilitators and the communities being empowered are closely linked to the study of government science. Syafiie (2017) asserts that government science is an applied discipline, prioritizing practical application—specifically in managing the relationship between those who govern (authorities) and those who are governed (the people). Within this

context of interaction, harmonious synergy is essential to ensure that social organization and economic capacity-building programs elicit a positive public response, ultimately fostering the common good (Maria et al., 2023).

Furthermore, effective governance in executing empowerment programs requires a blend of academic competence and the art of leadership. According to Syafiie (2022), governance encompasses both science and art; the artistic element is evident in the many government leaders who skillfully and charismatically steer the machinery of government, even without a formal educational background in the field. It is this art of leadership that often proves decisive in mobilizing participation and cultivating public trust in development agendas (Labolo, 2023).

The successful manifestation of this blend of art and science in governance depends heavily on how policies are implemented on the ground. Fauzan (2024) states that implementation refers to the actions taken to achieve the objectives established within a decision. Without a structured, adaptive, and result-oriented implementation phase, a carefully designed community empowerment concept remains merely a plan on paper, failing to deliver concrete improvements to public welfare (Sutmasa, 2021). The formulation of an empowerment program stems from a formal leadership commitment grounded in noble values. According to Ndraha (2014), policy is defined as the optimal choice – an effort to process governance values derived from administrative wisdom that are formally, ethically, and morally binding, aimed at fulfilling the accountability of government actors within the administrative sphere. Consequently, the implementation of empowerment policies carries a significant moral responsibility to translate bureaucratic wisdom into tangible solutions for the socio-economic challenges faced by citizens (Permatasari, 2020). Despite a well-designed policy foundation, the reality on the ground often reveals a gap between expectations and actual outcomes due to various structural and cultural obstacles (Mursalim, 2017). Regional potential often remains underutilized due to hindering factors such as limited infrastructure, lack of access to capital, and low levels of technological literacy among the community. This phenomenon necessitates an in-depth evaluation to identify root causes, thereby enhancing program effectiveness and accelerating equitable improvements in community welfare (Aneta, 2012). Cikeusik District in Pandeglang Regency exemplifies these dynamics; while it possesses significant potential in the agriculture, fisheries, and handicraft sectors, this potential has not been fully optimized, leaving room for further improvement in community welfare. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on two primary issues: the implementation of the community empowerment program in Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency, and the factors hindering that implementation. The objective is to examine and analyze the implementation of the community empowerment program, as well as to identify the factors hindering it at the research site.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to describe and deeply analyze the implementation of community empowerment in Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency. This approach was selected for its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study through systematic data

collection. Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources using techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews, and document review (Sugiyono, 2022). Informants were selected using purposive sampling, comprising key informants—who possessed a deep understanding of the research focus—and supporting informants, who provided additional information as required by the study.

Data validity was verified using source triangulation—comparing data derived from interviews with findings from observations and documentation—to ensure the consistency and credibility of the information (Miles & Huberman, 1992). Subsequently, the data were analyzed descriptively through processes of collection, categorization, presentation, and interpretation, thereby yielding a holistic picture of community empowerment implementation in Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency.

Result and Discussion

This study analyzes the implementation of community empowerment in Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency, utilizing George C. Edwards III's (2010) policy implementation theory, which encompasses four key indicators: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. These indicators serve to explain the extent to which the community empowerment policy is effectively implemented and to identify the factors influencing both its success and the obstacles encountered during execution.

Regarding communication, the findings indicate that the process of disseminating information about community empowerment programs in Cikeusik District has not functioned optimally. Observations and interviews with informants reveal that details concerning activity schedules, program mechanisms, administrative requirements, and target beneficiaries are often communicated with very little lead time before the activities take place. This situation leaves the community with limited time to grasp program objectives or prepare the necessary requirements. Consequently, community attendance and participation levels in various empowerment activities have fallen short of expectations. Some residents even reported learning about activities only after they had already occurred or through indirect word-of-mouth from other community members. This phenomenon demonstrates that information dissemination has failed to reach all segments of the community equitably.

The research also indicates that the prevailing communication patterns rely heavily on conventional approaches—such as notice boards, village meetings, announcements by village officials, and word-of-mouth communication. While these methods retain a degree of effectiveness, particularly in rural communities with strong social ties, they suffer from significant limitations, including slow information dissemination, a high risk of message distortion, and restricted reach among residents who do not attend meetings. Conversely, the use of digital media for public communication remains suboptimal. Yet, the utilization of social media, messaging apps, and government digital platforms could offer faster, more efficient channels capable of reaching a much broader segment of the community. This situation indicates that the communication strategy currently employed remains rooted in traditional patterns and

has not yet fully adapted to the advancements in information technology prevalent in society.

Beyond communication with the public, the study also reveals that inter-agency coordination in the execution of empowerment programs faces various obstacles. Coordination among the sub-district government, regional government agencies, village administrations, and other technical bodies has not yet functioned with full effectiveness. Informants noted that changes to activity schedules, delays in correspondence, and discrepancies in program timing frequently lead to a lack of synchronization during implementation. Consequently, certain empowerment agendas have required schedule adjustments or even postponements due to a lack of timely support from relevant agencies. These circumstances demonstrate that internal inter-organizational communication remains largely administrative in nature and lacks the backing of a fully integrated coordination system. Yet, policy implementation involving multiple stakeholders demands intensive communication to ensure that all implementers share a common understanding of objectives, the division of tasks, and activity schedules.

When analyzed using George C. Edwards III's policy implementation theory, communication emerges as a fundamental factor determining the success of policy implementation. Edwards III posits that effective communication must satisfy three key dimensions: transmission, clarity, and consistency. The transmission dimension concerns how accurately information is conveyed to all implementers and target groups. In this study, the information transmission process was not fully effective; information often reached the public with limited lead time and failed to reach the entire target audience. Consequently, some community members did not receive information directly, resulting in low participation in the program.

The second dimension, clarity, was also not fully met. Interview results indicate that some community members did not fully grasp the objectives, benefits, or implementation mechanisms of the empowerment program. Several implementers at the sub-district and village levels also reported needing more detailed explanations regarding activity procedures, as the technical guidelines received did not operationally detail the program's implementation stages. This lack of clarity creates the potential for divergent perceptions between implementers and the public regarding the policy's direction. In public policy implementation, unclear information often leads to varying interpretations, preventing uniform program execution.

Furthermore, consistency remains a challenge in implementing community empowerment policies in Cikeusik District. Research findings show that information conveyed to the public and implementers was not always consistent, particularly regarding changes to activity schedules, implementation mechanisms, and administrative requirements. Rapid changes in information caused confusion among the public and eroded trust in the program's execution. For implementers, these changes necessitated the revision of previously established work plans. Such conditions demonstrate that inconsistent communication can hinder policy implementation effectiveness, as every change requires an adjustment process that cannot always be executed quickly.

These findings indicate that communication in community empowerment implementation is influenced not only by the mechanics of information delivery but also by the organization's capacity to establish a planned and sustainable public communication system. Communication should not be viewed merely as the dissemination of information regarding activity schedules, but rather as a process of building understanding, trust, and community participation across all stages of the empowerment program. Therefore, a more systematic communication strategy is required, involving the formulation of a planned outreach schedule, optimal use of digital media, strengthened inter-agency coordination, and the establishment of community feedback mechanisms. In this way, communication serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as an instrument to enhance community participation, strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, and drive the successful, effective, and sustainable implementation of community empowerment policies in Cikeusik District.

Regarding resources, research findings indicate that resource availability is a critical factor determining the successful implementation of community empowerment policies in Cikeusik District. According to George C. Edwards III, resources encompass not only financial aspects but also human resources, information, authority, and facilities that support policy execution. Although the government allocates an annual budget for community empowerment through various development programs, the research reveals that the utilization of these funds has not been fully optimized. A primary obstacle lies in the budget disbursement process, which is hampered by lengthy, multi-tiered administrative procedures requiring multiple verification stages. Consequently, funds are not always available in alignment with activity schedules, forcing adjustments to timelines, reductions in the scope of activities, or even the postponement of implementation until the following period. Delays in budget disbursement not only compromise program effectiveness but also erode public trust, as planned activities frequently fail to proceed according to the announced schedules.

Beyond funding, the research identifies the quality of human resources as a significant challenge in implementing community empowerment programs. District officials, as the primary implementers, bear extensive responsibilities—ranging from planning, coordination, and execution to community facilitation and activity reporting. However, the available workforce is not commensurate with the complexity of the tasks involved. Some employees must manage multiple programs simultaneously, resulting in a heavy workload. Furthermore, the technical competence of officials in the field of community empowerment varies considerably. Interviews indicate that most implementers rely more on work experience and self-directed learning than on competencies gained through structured education and training. This suggests that policy implementation relies heavily on individual experience rather than on a system for sustainable capacity building.

These limitations in human resource capacity are particularly evident in the officials' ability to manage the entire lifecycle of community empowerment programs. During the planning stage, for instance, difficulties persist in comprehensively identifying community needs and formulating programs that truly align with local

potential. At the implementation stage, officials also face challenges in providing guidance to community groups to enable their active participation in every activity. Similarly, regarding monitoring and evaluation, capabilities in establishing success indicators, analyzing program achievements, and formulating recommendations for improvement require further strengthening. These conditions are influenced by limited opportunities to participate in training, technical guidance, or certification programs related to community empowerment management, group facilitation, participatory program management, and the use of information technology in government administration. Consequently, the quality of policy implementation has not developed optimally, as officials have not received adequate support for competency development.

Based on George C. Edwards III's theory, resource limitations are a primary reason why policy implementation fails to achieve established goals. Edwards III emphasizes that even a well-formulated policy will not yield effective implementation if those responsible lack adequate resources. In the context of this study, the issues lie not only in the budget size but also in the effectiveness of budget management, the adequacy of personnel numbers, the competence of implementers, and the availability of supporting facilities. Therefore, enhancing the effectiveness of community empowerment implementation requires strategic measures: simplifying budget disbursement procedures, strengthening inter-agency coordination in financial management, building personnel capacity through continuous education and training, and developing organizational learning systems to transform individual knowledge and experience into institutional competence. With adequate resource support, the implementation of community empowerment policies will not only be more effective but will also improve public service quality, strengthen community participation, and sustainably achieve empowerment goals.

Regarding the disposition aspect, the study reveals that officials in Cikeusik District are fundamentally committed to implementing the community empowerment policies established by the government. This commitment is reflected in their efforts to execute various empowerment programs in accordance with their assigned duties and responsibilities, despite facing resource limitations and administrative hurdles. Implementers strive to ensure that all planned activities are carried out in compliance with applicable regulations. However, this commitment has not yet been fully matched by the ability to innovate during program execution. The findings indicate that most officials still implement programs in a normative and administrative manner, adhering strictly to directives from the regency government or relevant technical agencies. Consequently, program implementation is oriented more toward meeting administrative targets than achieving the substantive goals of community empowerment. As a result, there remains limited scope for developing local initiatives tailored to the specific social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the Cikeusik District community. The tendency for implementers to await instructions from higher levels of government indicates that the policy implementation process remains top-down in nature. In practice, sub-district officials lack the autonomy to develop more innovative empowerment models tailored to the specific potential and needs of the communities in their areas. This is despite the fact that each village in Cikeusik Sub-district possesses distinct characteristics regarding

natural resource potential, socio-economic conditions, and levels of community participation. Consequently, a uniform implementation approach may not necessarily yield optimal results across all villages. This lack of local initiative stems not only from a bureaucratic culture that tends to be hierarchical but also from officials' apprehension about making decisions that deviate from established guidelines. As a result, opportunities for innovation such as developing empowerment models based on local potential, utilizing digital technology for community support, or forging partnerships with various stakeholder have not been fully realized.

The study also identified an information gap affecting officials responsible for policy implementation. Most informants reported that the technical guidelines, operational instructions, and program implementation modules they received were overly general, lacking detailed explanations regarding implementation stages at both the sub-district and village levels. This situation compels officials to interpret applicable regulations based on their own work experience or individual understanding. Such divergent interpretations can lead to inconsistencies in program execution, affecting aspects ranging from planning and support mechanisms to activity targeting and evaluation. In the long run, this may undermine the consistency of policy implementation across villages, resulting in uneven program quality. Furthermore, the lack of adequate information affects officials' confidence in making decisions when encountering issues not explicitly addressed in the policy.

When analyzed through the lens of George C. Edwards III's policy implementation theory, "disposition" is understood not merely as the implementers' willingness or commitment to execute a policy, but also encompasses their level of understanding, acceptance, and readiness to consistently implement the policy's objectives. Edwards III posits that policy implementation is effective when implementers hold a positive attitude toward the policy, comprehend the intended goals, and receive adequate support in performing their duties. In the context of this study, while the commitment of the officials is commendable, it has not been matched by sufficient capacity building, clear technical guidelines, or adequate scope for innovation. Therefore, enhancing the quality of community empowerment implementation requires strategies to strengthen implementers' dispositions through continuous training, more practical technical guidance, the formulation of clear standard operating procedures (SOPs), and periodic mentoring from relevant agencies. Beyond boosting official competence, these measures can foster a work culture that is innovative, adaptive, and problem-solving oriented; this ensures that community empowerment programs do not merely satisfy administrative requirements but genuinely address community needs and achieve policy goals effectively and sustainably.

Regarding the bureaucratic structure, the study indicates that program execution generally adheres to Regent Regulations and Ministry of Village Regulations. However, there is a lack of specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing the implementation mechanisms for community empowerment at the sub-district level. Consequently, the execution of activities remains reliant on the individual work habits of the implementers.

The absence of SOPs means that coordination processes, task allocation, reporting mechanisms, and evaluation procedures lack uniform standards. This situation risks creating disparities in program execution across different areas, thereby suboptimizing the effectiveness of policy implementation.

In addition to analyzing policy implementation indicators, the study identifies several factors hindering the success of community empowerment programs. The first obstacle is the limited understanding among some implementers regarding the policy's substance and the ideal stages of implementation. This situation has resulted in program implementation being more oriented toward completing administrative tasks than achieving sustainable community empowerment goals.

Another obstacle is the lack of adequate technical support from the relevant agencies. The assistance provided to date has focused primarily on reviewing administrative reports rather than guiding the actual implementation process in the field. Consequently, technical issues encountered by sub-district officials often fail to receive prompt solutions. The study also found that delays in the disbursement of stimulus funds and the limited technical competence of implementers have slowed down activity execution. Furthermore, the informal and unsystematic nature of outreach efforts has meant that information about the program has not reached all segments of the community equitably, resulting in suboptimal public participation in the empowerment program.

In practice, the community empowerment program in Cikeusik District focuses on developing agricultural and maritime potential, enhancing community workforce skills, and strengthening the capacity of village governments to manage budgets independently. This focus demonstrates that empowerment aims not only to improve the community's economic well-being but also to bolster village institutional capacity for managing sustainable development.

Research findings indicate that program implementation tends to be more successful in villages that foster collaboration through the Pentahelix approach—engaging academics, government, the community, the business sector, and the media. Such collaboration facilitates knowledge transfer, financial support, community capacity building, local product marketing, and more effective information dissemination. However, the model's continued implementation faces various challenges, including limited road infrastructure to outlying villages, a lack of dedicated district-level budgets, low technology adoption among some community members, and inaccurate poverty data that risks misdirecting aid. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen inter-institutional coordination, establish clearer Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), enhance human resource capacity, optimize information technology usage, and improve community data collection systems; these measures will ensure that community empowerment in Cikeusik District operates more effectively and sustainably, ultimately leading to tangible improvements in community welfare.

Conclusion

Regarding the implementation of the community empowerment program in Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency, the research findings indicate that the program

has not been implemented optimally. This is evident from the low effectiveness observed across several implementation indicators: communication is uneven and fails to reach all segments of the community; human resources are limited in both quantity and quality; the implementers' disposition tends to be purely administrative, lacking a deep understanding of the empowerment vision; and the bureaucratic structure remains top-down, lacking adaptability and horizontal coordination. Furthermore, the absence of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and technical regulations at the district level, combined with weak involvement from external agencies, has resulted in a program that operates superficially and fails to address the root causes of community issues. Key factors hindering the program's implementation include: a lack of understanding regarding the policy among implementers and the community; limitations in human resources and funding, as well as improper budget execution; and insufficient outreach and community engagement, which has resulted in a lack of participatory support for the program.

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