
Women Empowerment in Rural Tourism Development in Saung Ciburial Villages, Garut

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Abstrak

Rural tourism is not just an alternative tourism but a vital aspect in social development economy society. Rural tourism is also an important tool in enforcing the principle of gender equality because women play a big role in employment in rural tourism development. The main focus in this research is to review of the extent of women's empowerment in rural tourism development in Saung Ciburial Villages, Garut. Using descriptive method and qualitative approach, data collection is done through integrated observation and interviews, participants in this study are stakeholders in tourism development and woman which involved in rural tourism activities in Saung Ciburial. Research results show that women in Saung Ciburial Village has been involved and empowered in a way active in activity tourism, starting from power technical, lower level management, to the to top level management, they trusted for become administrator even leader government organization /agency village.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Women Empowerment, Gender Equality

Received: October 2024

Accepted: November 2024

Published: December 2024

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the development of the tourism sector globally is not only about the movement of tourists to and from tourist destinations, but also plays a vital role in upholding the principles of sustainable development, including commitments to gender equality, women's empowerment, and leaving no one behind (UNWTO, 2019). In a more massive and professional era, gender equality has become an important aspect to pay attention to, as it is possible for women with the capacity and competence to hold the same positions in the industry, especially in the tourism sector, which has become one of the fastest-growing industrial sectors (Ampumuza, 2008). Every human being has the same rights to create, particularly in the context of tourism development in a destination. Similarly, women deserve equal shares and empowerment. Women's empowerment reflects women's ability to determine and control their own circumstances and to realize their aspirations to live the lives they desire (Galie & Fanworth, 2019).

Empowering women through tourism has proven to break the perspective regarding women's roles being limited to raising children while men provide financial support for the household. Through tourism, women's empowerment has been facilitated in the form of education and involvement in organizations (Adzmani & Hunt, 2017). In recent years, rural tourism has not only been viewed as an alternative form of tourism but has become a primary focus in its development and has had a significant impact on improving the socio-economic conditions of communities. Rural tourism is also an important tool in upholding the principles of gender equality as women play a significant role in employment relationships in the development of rural tourism (Duarte & Pereira, 2018).

In Indonesia, the development of rural tourism is closely related to the concept of community-based tourism. Community-based tourism is considered to provide opportunities for communities to enhance their involvement and participation in tourism, thus benefiting economic, social, and cultural conditions (Nitikasetsoontorn, 2015). As is known, the development of tourist villages must uphold gender equality to achieve sustainability because without gender equality, sustainability cannot be realized (Alarcón & Cole, 2019). One of the tourist villages implementing community-based tourism is Saung Ciburial Tourism Village in Garut, West Java. Saung Ciburial Tourism Village has become a highlight for Garut as it successfully entered the 50 Best Tourism Villages in Indonesia 2021. In the development of tourism in Saung Ciburial Village, the focus is on empowering local communities and improving the economy (Banani, 2017).

For years, the division of labor has still reflected gender differences and physical conditions. Although there are still many inequalities regarding the roles and positions of women in labor empowerment, rural tourism presents a significant opportunity for women to take an active role, perform professional functions with impact, and promote gender equality (Duarte & Pereira, 2018). Therefore, further studies are needed on the roles and positions of women in the development of rural tourism.

Many experts still view women's involvement in tourism development with skepticism. Pastore et al. (2020), who categorize levels of women's empowerment in an industrial sector into upper and lower levels, state that women's involvement in the tourism sector is largely still at the lower level (technical and

operational) and has not yet dominated the upper level (managerial and decision-making). This is because men in the workplace are perceived to have higher self-esteem, are more willing to take risks, are more competitive, and can control work better than women (Blay & Kahn, 2017). As a result, women often occupy low-level technical positions and handle traditional tasks such as serving, housekeeping, and kitchen duties (Equations, 2007). Consequently, female workers tend to earn relatively lower incomes compared to male workers due to the discrimination they face (Polachek, 1985 in Polachek, 2014). Moreover, the lack of improvement in quality, skills, and relevant experience makes it difficult for women to move out of the lower levels and reach higher positions such as managerial or leadership roles (Goldin, 2014).

These findings are contested by other experts like Borghan, Ter Weel, and Weinberg (2014), who argue that women tend to have better interpersonal skills than men, making them more suitable for managerial positions. Another study by Islam and Amin (2016) states that the performance evaluations of women in managerial positions are rated higher than those of men. From this literature review, it can be concluded that there is still a prevailing view that women are not yet deemed suitable for certain positions in the tourism industry development. However, on the other hand, if women are given the opportunity to hold such positions, their potential for success and achieving good results is significant.

The application of gender equality principles and women's empowerment in Indonesia is closely related to the implementation of community-based tourism (CBT). This aligns with the Indonesian government's focus on developing tourism as an economic driver for local communities. This is consistent with Lane's (1994) assertion that involving women in the tourism sector should begin at the smallest scale in tourism management, such as in villages or tourist sites. Women's empowerment needs to be mapped according to the core concepts of tourism products, particularly in developing tourist attractions, providing access to villages, managing accommodations, supplying tourist facilities/amenities, and establishing tourism institutions, especially in rural destination development (Stanisic & Milutinovic, 2020).

Scheyvens (2000) argues that women are assessed as empowered or disempowered through four dimensions: social, psychological, political, and economic empowerment:

1. **Social Empowerment:** Community groups have the integrity to conduct activities such as tourism. Social empowerment can be seen when ecotourism indirectly or directly provides greater access for communities to enjoy public facilities and services.
2. **Psychological Empowerment:** Communities become optimistic about the future, confident in their abilities, independent, and show pride in their traditions and cultures.
3. **Political Empowerment:** Community groups have equal opportunities to express their opinions and participate in tourism activities, as well as be involved in monitoring and evaluating these activities.

4. **Economic Empowerment:** This dimension considers job opportunities that arise in the formal and informal sectors, as well as business opportunities. Economic empowerment opens doors for women who might not otherwise have the chance to work and provides reliable economic benefits or income (Scheyvens, 2000).

METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive with a qualitative approach. This aligns with Hardani et al. (2020), state that a qualitative approach is an investigative process aimed at understanding social issues based on natural occurring contexts, with the goal of comprehensively understanding phenomena through holistic analysis, resulting in descriptions that contain synthesis and abstraction.

Primary data collection, which consists of qualitative data, is conducted through semi-structured interviews using snowball sampling techniques. The criteria include all stakeholders involved in the development of rural tourism, as well as women who actively participate in the tourism development of Saung Ciburial Tourism Village.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In practice, women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village have already been empowered in tourism activities in their village. According to interviews with several women leaders in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village, the involvement of women in tourism activities began in 2002, when women were engaged in programs such as the Family Welfare Empowerment Program (PKK), Special Women's Consultations (Musyawarah Khusus Perempuan), and participation in the Sub-District Election Committee (PPK). In 2007 and 2008, women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village were further involved by managing one of the business units owned by the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes), specifically in the management of clean water distributed to all residents of Saung Ciburial Tourism Village. Until now, women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village are involved in other village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) business units, such as environmental management (cleanliness), food and beverage provision, managing homestays, running micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), welcoming guests, and even participating in the organizational structure of Saung Ciburial Tourism Village management alongside men.

Various benefits have been felt by women participating in tourism activities in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village. Economically, they report being able to support their families' finances and even manage MSMEs based on local commodities, producing outstanding products such as foldable bags, local drink like teh kewer, and local food like *wajit*. Socially, women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village have increased their self-confidence, improved their quality of life, and are able to voice their opinions through the forums provided. Regarding education, there is no discrimination against women or men in pursuing education up to the high school level. With improved education levels, there has also been a decrease in early marriage rates over the past few year.

In general, the forms of women's empowerment in tourism activities can be divided into four categories, according to Scheyvens (2000). These forms of empowerment, as they relate to the conditions in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village, include:

1. Social Empowerment

Social empowerment refers to the integrity of the community in executing activities such as ecotourism, which expands access to public services or facilities such as water and health clinics (Scheyvens, 2000). In Saung Ciburial Tourism Village, there has been cooperation and a clear division of tasks between women and men, as well as equal rights for citizens to access resources and public facilities. One concrete example is the absence of discrimination in accessing or utilizing clean water. Furthermore, there is a clear division of tasks in managing MSMEs, where men handle the procurement of raw materials and take on heavy work in building public facilities, while women are responsible for managing or maintaining those facilities.

2. Psychological Empowerment

An indicator of psychological empowerment is the increase in optimism among individuals due to improved conditions after being empowered. Scheyvens (2000) states that psychological empowerment fosters optimism about the future, confidence in one's abilities, independence, and pride in traditions and culture. This is evident among the women of Saung Ciburial Tourism Village, who report feeling proud to be part of the village as tourism activities have made it more recognized by the wider community. Additionally, these women have engaged in preserving village traditions and utilizing these traditions to produce goods, enhancing their pride and confidence. For example, they have transformed *kewer* plant into *kewer* tea, producing it in bulk and making it a signature product and welcome drink.

3. Political Empowerment

The main indicator of this form of empowerment is that women have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes formally. In practice, women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village are involved and dominate the organizational structure of the tourism management. Women dominate the management structure because they are seen as more capable of accommodating and managing tasks effectively and meticulously. They can express their opinions on the management and development of tourism in both formal and informal forums. Moreover, women are also included in the organizational structure of the BUMDes management in Suka Laksana Village, which is even led by a woman. This aligns with Scheyvens' (2000) assertion that political empowerment occurs when all community groups have equal opportunities to express their opinions and participate in tourism activities, as well as in monitoring and evaluating these activities. The women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village, state that having their own income makes them feel empowered, not much different from their

husbands, in making decisions within the family. This can lead to healthier relationships, as both partners feel valued and heard. Ultimately, financial independence can play a significant role in promoting mutual respect and shared responsibilities in family dynamics.

4. Economic Empowerment

The main indicator of economic empowerment is the consideration of job opportunities in both formal and informal sectors, as well as business opportunities. Economic empowerment opens doors for women who may not have opportunities to work and provides reliable economic benefits or regular income (Scheyvens, 2000). In practice, economic independence and job opportunities have emerged in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village, allowing women to run businesses. Since the introduction of tourism activities, women have been involved or employed in various fields supporting tourism operations, such as managing homestays, cleaning services, food and beverage provision, and managing MSMEs. Women involved in tourism receive monthly income, helping to improve their families' living standards, and sometimes receive additional income from entrance fees. Their income is mostly used as additional income for the family, which helps improve the family's standard of living. They state that having their own income gives them opportunities that are not much different from their husbands when it comes to making decisions within the family. They also have the opportunity to run businesses, managing the entire process from production to marketing in MSMEs.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village have been actively and comprehensively empowered in tourism activities within the village. There is no gender discrimination at any stage of the tourism activities. Women's involvement in tourism has even reached upper levels, where they are trusted as managers and leaders/chairs of organizations or village government bodies.

Furthermore, when aligned with the four forms of community empowerment proposed by Scheyvens (2000), it can be concluded that women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village have met all four forms and have benefited from their participation in tourism activities. Women in Saung Ciburial Tourism Village has experienced benefits in psychological, social, political, and economic aspects through their involvement in tourism. Psychologically, they feel proud that their village is recognized and visited by tourists from other areas. Socially, there is no discrimination in accessing public facilities, and women and men share responsibilities in managing facilities for communal needs. Economically, they have gained additional income that helps improve their family's quality of life compared to before their involvement in tourism. Politically, with economic independence and the skills they possess, they have better opportunities to express their opinions, make decisions within the family, and have the chance to become part of the village organization management.

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