

COLLECTIVE BUSINESS MODELS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES: EVIDENCE FROM TALISAYAN, INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study investigates how Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB) functions as a platform for empowering women in small-scale fisheries in Talisayan, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach that combined participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, the research analyzes women's adaptive strategies, collective objectives, social integration, and cultural transformation. The findings show that KUB enables women to diversify livelihoods through fish processing and micro-enterprises, pursue collective objectives that strengthen their bargaining power in local markets, and build solidarity networks that reduce dependency on patron-client relations while fostering bridging and linking social capital. At the same time, participation in KUB supports cultural change by reshaping gender norms and legitimizing women's identities as economic actors within their communities. By applying Parsons' AGIL framework in conjunction with social capital theory and social constructivism, the study demonstrates how women's agency is simultaneously rooted in economic practices and cultural recognition. Beyond contributing empirically to the understanding of gender and fisheries in Indonesia, the study advances broader debates on empowerment by showing how collective enterprises can operate both as an economic safety net and as a transformative mechanism for social identity reconstruction. The results also offer practical insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to integrate community-based enterprises into sustainable fisheries governance and coastal development strategies.

Keywords: women fishers, empowerment, collective enterprises, AGIL, social capital, social constructivism, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Women play indispensable roles in small-scale fisheries worldwide, particularly in post-harvest processing, marketing, and household provisioning, yet their contributions remain systematically undervalued and undercounted (Harper et al., 2017; Kleiber et al., 2014; FAO, 2021). In Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, gendered divisions of labour, unequal access to assets, and persistent socio-cultural norms constrain women's ability to fully benefit from fisheries value chains (Weeratunge et al., 2010; Belton et al., 2020). As a result, despite their centrality to food security and household resilience, women fishers often occupy marginal positions in decision-making and receive limited recognition in fisheries governance frameworks.

In Indonesia's coastal communities, these challenges are further amplified by economic pressures and ecological change. The village of Talisayan in Berau Regency, East Kalimantan, provides a compelling case: women-led Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB) have emerged to collectively process and market value-added fishery products such as shrimp paste, salted fish, and fish crackers. These collective enterprises provide not only income diversification but also social spaces where women negotiate new roles, identities, and networks in a sector historically dominated by men. Yet, structural obstacles—such as limited market access, reliance on patron-client relations,

technological gaps, and entrenched gender norms—continue to shape the extent of empowerment achieved through KUBs.

While studies on gender in fisheries have expanded in recent decades (Kabeer, 2020; Fröcklin et al., 2012; Bene & Friend, 2011), there remains a critical knowledge gap. Much of the literature focuses on descriptive accounts of women's participation or policy recommendations for gender mainstreaming, but few analyses systematically integrate Parsons' AGIL framework with social capital theory and social constructivism to examine how collective enterprises both facilitate livelihood adaptation and reconfigure women's agency. Such a synthesis is necessary to capture the dual dynamics at play: the structural-functional processes that enable resilience (AGIL), and the social processes through which meaning, identity, and empowerment are constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Putnam, 2000; Ostrom, 1990).

This study addresses that gap through an ethnographic case study of women fishers in Talisayan. Specifically, it asks: (1) How do women-led KUBs perform AGIL functions—adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency—in small-scale fisheries contexts? (2) Through what mechanisms of social capital (bonding, bridging, linking) do KUBs enhance women's access to markets, finance, and decision-making? (3) How do these collective practices reconstruct women's economic identities and transform their roles within households and community institutions? These questions guide an inquiry into the interplay of structural constraints, collective agency, and socio-cultural transformation in coastal livelihoods.

The study makes three contributions. First, it advances a synthetic analytical framework that links AGIL, social capital, and social constructivism to assess empowerment processes in community-based enterprises. Second, it provides empirical evidence from Talisayan on how women's KUBs navigate economic precarity, ecological challenges, and gender norms through diversification and collective organization. Third, it generates policy-relevant insights by identifying leverage points for gender-responsive finance, digital upgrading, and value-chain integration, offering lessons for inclusive coastal development and fisheries governance in Indonesia and beyond.

By centring women's lived experiences and practices, this article reframes collective business models not merely as survival strategies but as institutional spaces where agency, identity, and resilience are co-produced. In doing so, it contributes to both scholarly debates on gender and fisheries and practical efforts to design equitable and sustainable pathways for coastal livelihoods.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To understand how Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB) functions as a space for women's empowerment, this study integrates three main theoretical approaches. First, Talcott Parsons' AGIL framework (1951) provides a structural–functional lens to analyze how KUB operates across four dimensions: Adaptation (economic diversification), Goal Attainment (collective goal-setting), Integration (strengthening solidarity and social networks), and Latency (shifting values and gender roles). Second, Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000; Ostrom, 1990) explains how networks of trust, collective norms, and bonding, bridging, and linking ties underpin the sustainability of collective enterprises. Third, Berger and Luckmann's Social Constructivism (1966) highlights how women's identities as economic actors are constructed through externalization (everyday business practices), objectivation (social recognition), and internalization (the acceptance of new roles and identities).

These three approaches are dialectically interconnected. The AGIL framework explains the institutional functions of KUB as a system; social capital theory illuminates the relational resources that sustain the system; while social constructivism reveals how women reconstruct identities and meanings through their participation. By combining these perspectives, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of empowerment processes—not only as economic survival, but also as the reconfiguration of social relations and gender roles in coastal communities.

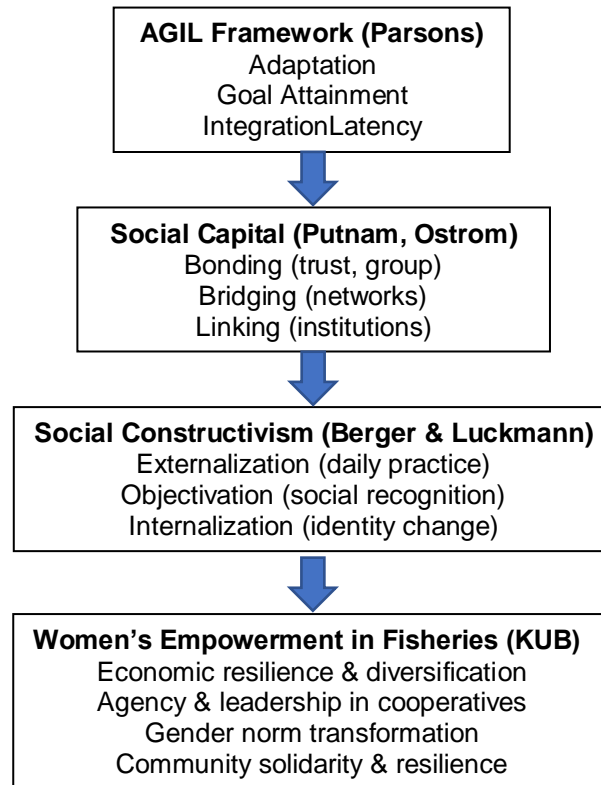


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: AGIL–Social Capital–Empowerment Pathways

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design to analyze how women’s collective enterprises—particularly Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB)—function as platforms for empowerment in small-scale fisheries. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth, contextualized exploration of institutional dynamics, cultural meanings, and everyday practices embedded in the lived experiences of women fishers in Talisayan, Berau Regency, East Kalimantan. As Yin (2018) emphasizes, case studies are particularly useful for examining “how” and “why” questions in real-life settings, especially when boundaries between phenomena and context are blurred.

Research Site and Participants

Talisayan Village was deliberately selected due to its heavy reliance on small-scale fisheries and the emergence of women-led KUB groups. These groups are embedded in a gendered division of labor where women dominate post-harvest activities such as fish drying, shrimp paste production, and fish cracker processing. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, experience, and social position. Participants included:

- Leaders and members of KUB,
- Local facilitators and cooperative officers,
- Village leaders and elders, and
- Representatives of women's associations.

In total, 36 participants were engaged in this research.

Data Collection

Three primary qualitative methods were employed:

1. Participant Observation – conducted over a six-month fieldwork period, enabling the researcher to capture daily routines, production activities, and community interactions.
2. In-depth Semi-structured Interviews – used to elicit personal narratives, aspirations, and perceptions of empowerment.
3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – held with KUB members to explore collective reflections on organizational dynamics, gender relations, and economic strategies.

Secondary data sources such as cooperative records, policy documents, and training materials were also reviewed to triangulate the findings.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model:

- Data reduction (coding and categorizing narratives into themes such as adaptation, integration, market challenges, and gender norms),
- Data display (matrices, diagrams, and conceptual frameworks), and
- Conclusion drawing/verification (linking empirical findings with theoretical frameworks).

The analysis was guided by two complementary theoretical approaches:

- AGIL framework (Parsons, 1951) – used to interpret KUB as a social institution that fulfills four systemic functions: Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency.
- Social Constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) – applied to examine how women negotiate new economic identities and gender roles through collective practices, moving from marginal “helpers” to recognized entrepreneurs and leaders.

This dual-theoretical lens allowed the study to connect structural-functional analysis (AGIL) with agency-centered perspectives (constructivism), highlighting both institutional and cultural dimensions of women's empowerment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Adaptation (A): Economic Diversification and Resilience

Women fishers in Talisayan Village, Berau Regency, have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt to socio-economic and ecological pressures by diversifying their income sources through fisheries-based processing enterprises. Products such as shrimp paste, salted fish, and fish crackers not only extend the shelf life of marine resources but also create higher value-added commodities that strengthen household incomes. Informants reported that collective production and marketing through Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB) improved efficiency and allowed them to stabilize earnings, especially during periods of fluctuating fish prices and seasonal scarcity. This resonates with Ellis' (2000) sustainable livelihoods framework, which underscores diversification as a key strategy for resilience, and with Allison and Ellis (2001), who highlight the importance of adaptive livelihoods in small-scale fisheries under conditions of ecological and market uncertainty.

Yet, despite these adaptive strategies, several constraints limit the scalability of women-led enterprises. Many women remain dependent on informal, localized markets due to weak integration into value chains, insufficient branding, and the absence of certification mechanisms. Belton et al. (2020) note that small-scale fisheries actors often struggle with fragmented supply chains and limited institutional support, leaving them vulnerable to middlemen and volatile market dynamics. Similarly, Kruijssen et al. (2017) emphasize that women in fisheries frequently face barriers in entering high-value segments of aquaculture and seafood markets, largely due to gendered exclusion and structural inequalities.

The potential of digital technology to overcome these barriers has been recognized. Social media platforms and e-commerce tools provide opportunities for women to access broader consumer bases and reduce reliance on intermediaries. GSMA (2023) reports that mobile-based tools have empowered women entrepreneurs in low- and middle-income countries to expand market access, while OECD (2018) stresses the need to close the digital gender gap through capacity building and infrastructure development. However, in Talisayan, poor digital literacy and limited infrastructure continue to hinder adoption, underscoring the need for context-specific training and investment in digital inclusion.

Access to capital remains another critical challenge. Women fishers often lack collateral, credit history, and legal documentation, which systematically excludes them from formal financial institutions. As Kabeer (2018) and Abebe and Kegne (2023) demonstrate, gender biases in financial systems disproportionately limit women's entrepreneurial potential, despite evidence that microfinance and group-based lending schemes can enhance financial independence and resilience. The situation in Talisayan confirms these findings, with many women relying on informal loans or rotating savings groups (*arisan*), which provide short-term relief but restrict long-term business expansion.

Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach is relevant here, as it shifts the focus from financial resources alone to the substantive freedoms that women require to make meaningful life choices. For women in Talisayan, microfinance and cooperative-based lending offer more than capital: they provide the agency to invest in tools, diversify livelihoods, and build confidence as economic actors. Without such adaptive mechanisms, women's businesses remain vulnerable to external shocks such as climate change impacts, declining fish stocks, and market volatility.

Taken together, the experiences of women fishers in Talisayan illustrate the Adaptation function within Parsons' AGIL framework. By diversifying livelihoods, mobilizing collective resources through KUB, and cautiously engaging with new technologies and microfinance schemes, women are actively recalibrating their economic practices in response to external pressures. However, sustaining this adaptive capacity requires targeted support from governments, NGOs, and the private sector, including market integration policies, accessible financial services, and digital infrastructure development. Only through such systemic interventions can adaptive strategies translate into long-term resilience for women-led fisheries enterprises.

Goal Attainment (G): Collective Objectives and Market Integration

Within Parsons' AGIL framework, the function of Goal Attainment (G) refers to the capacity of social systems to define collective objectives and mobilize resources toward their achievement (Parsons, 1951). In Talisayan, women fishers have organized through *Kelompok Usaha Bersama* (KUB) to set shared goals that extend beyond household survival. These include stabilizing household incomes, improving bargaining power against middlemen, and expanding access to formal markets. The process of goal

definition is not merely economic but also deeply social, as it reflects the collective aspirations of women to assert agency within a gendered fisheries economy.

Through KUB, women are able to pool labor, share knowledge, and organize production more systematically. This cooperation helps reduce transaction costs and fosters collective negotiation strategies in the marketplace. By aligning individual aspirations with group objectives, KUB members pursue outcomes that would otherwise remain unattainable, such as scaling production, accessing government training programs, or securing participation in regional fairs and exhibitions. This aligns with Rauniyar and Kanbur's (2010) theory of inclusive growth, which stresses that collective action and institutional support are critical for marginalized groups to achieve sustainable development goals.

Despite these achievements, the integration of women-led enterprises into larger markets remains a persistent challenge. As Kruijsen et al. (2017) observe, women in aquaculture and fisheries value chains are often confined to low-value activities, with high-value export-oriented segments dominated by men and corporate actors. In Talisayan, informants highlighted the absence of strong product branding, fragmented supply chains, and lack of certification mechanisms as major barriers to achieving broader market penetration. These structural barriers limit women's ability to move beyond localized or informal markets and prevent them from securing higher margins for their products.

Digital technology offers new opportunities to overcome these barriers. The spread of mobile phones and social media platforms has begun to open alternative marketing channels, enabling women to directly connect with consumers and reduce reliance on intermediaries. Evidence from Aker and Mbiti (2010) demonstrates that mobile phones significantly enhance market efficiency in rural Africa, while GSMA (2022) confirms that digital tools can empower women entrepreneurs by expanding their reach and improving transaction security. In the case of Talisayan, however, weak digital literacy and inadequate infrastructure restrict the extent to which women can fully harness these tools. Training programs that integrate financial literacy with digital marketing skills are therefore essential to strengthen Goal Attainment.

Collective goal-setting also strengthens women's agency in institutional negotiations. By presenting themselves as organized groups rather than individual entrepreneurs, KUB members gain legitimacy in the eyes of government officials, NGOs, and private sector partners. This collective identity increases their chances of securing microcredit, training opportunities, and partnerships with local cooperatives. Kumar et al. (2021) have shown that participation in self-help groups in India enhances women's bargaining power and facilitates more equitable market integration. Similarly, in Talisayan, KUB has become a platform through which women articulate aspirations for upward mobility and negotiate for greater recognition in fisheries governance.

In sum, the Goal Attainment function in Talisayan illustrates how women fishers move from fragmented, individual struggles toward coordinated collective strategies. By setting shared objectives, engaging in joint marketing, and cautiously exploring digital avenues, KUBs embody the potential of collective enterprises to redefine women's roles in coastal economies. Nevertheless, the persistence of structural barriers—market exclusion, limited branding, and gender biases in value chains—underscores the need for systemic interventions. Linking KUB initiatives to regional and national fisheries development strategies could provide the institutional backing necessary to ensure that collective objectives translate into sustainable economic empowerment.

Integration (I): Social Capital and Collective Solidarity

The function of Integration (I) in Parsons' AGIL framework highlights the normative and relational mechanisms that bind individuals together into coherent social systems (Parsons, 1951). In the case of women fishers in Talisayan, this function is manifested through the dense networks of trust, reciprocity, and solidarity that sustain the operations of Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB). Social capital is both the foundation and the outcome of collective action, enabling women to collaborate effectively in environments where formal institutional support remains limited.

KUB provides a platform where women not only share resources but also exchange knowledge, coordinate production, and support one another in times of financial hardship or personal crisis. This reflects Putnam's (2000) conception of social capital as "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." Bonding social capital is particularly evident, as women's close relationships within their groups generate high levels of trust and collective identity (Woolcock, 2001). Such solidarity reduces transaction costs, enhances information flow, and provides an informal safety net that cushions members from economic and environmental shocks.

At the same time, KUB fosters bridging and linking forms of social capital. Bridging capital arises when women groups connect with neighboring cooperatives or community organizations, expanding their access to new markets and knowledge. Linking capital emerges in their efforts to engage with government officials, NGOs, and private-sector actors. As Szreter and Woolcock (2004) argue, linking social capital is critical for marginalized communities to access resources and opportunities that lie beyond their immediate networks. In Talisayan, the gradual establishment of these external relationships has allowed KUB members to participate in training workshops, secure small grants, and gain visibility in district-level development initiatives.

Empirical studies from other contexts corroborate these findings. Kruijssen et al. (2017) demonstrate that gender-inclusive value chains are more resilient when underpinned by strong social networks, while Torre et al. (2019) show how women's cooperatives in Mexico leveraged collective identity to achieve more stable incomes and market access. In Talisayan, women's ability to collectively negotiate with buyers and coordinate production schedules reflects the same principle: social capital amplifies economic agency.

However, integration through social capital is not without challenges. As Cleaver (2005) warns, the strength of internal cohesion can sometimes produce exclusionary practices, reinforcing hierarchies within groups. In Talisayan, younger or unmarried women occasionally reported reluctance to participate in KUB activities, citing generational divides and digital skill gaps. This suggests that integration must be continually nurtured through inclusive practices, mentorship programs, and efforts to prevent the dominance of older or more established members.

Despite these challenges, Integration in KUB has created a shared identity for women as legitimate economic actors in a fisheries sector historically dominated by men. This shift not only enhances the sustainability of their enterprises but also strengthens community resilience. By embedding economic activities within networks of solidarity and reciprocity, KUB demonstrates the central role of social capital in transforming women's marginalization into collective empowerment.

Latency (L): Normative Change and Gender Role Transformation

The function of Latency (L) in Parsons' AGIL framework refers to the preservation and renewal of cultural patterns and social values that ensure continuity across generations (Parsons, 1951). In Talisayan, this function becomes particularly significant as women's participation in *Kelompok Usaha Bersama* (KUB) catalyzes shifts in gender norms and social expectations. What was once considered peripheral "helping work" in fisheries—processing, marketing, and selling—has gradually gained legitimacy as women assert themselves as entrepreneurs and community leaders.

This normative transformation is not instantaneous but unfolds through everyday practices. Drawing on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social constructivism, empowerment can be understood as a process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Women first externalize new roles by engaging in entrepreneurial activities through KUB. These roles then become objectivated as they are recognized by peers, families, and local institutions. Over time, they are internalized into community culture, reshaping the social reality of what it means to be a woman in fisheries.

In practice, participation in KUB has enabled women to challenge long-standing patriarchal constraints. They have gained visibility in public decision-making forums, acquired greater control over household finances, and become role models for younger generations of women. Such developments resonate with Kabeer's (2018) conception of empowerment as the expansion of women's ability to make strategic life choices in contexts where this ability was previously denied. They also align with FAO's (2021) call for mainstreaming gender equality in fisheries, recognizing that women's leadership and participation are crucial for building sustainable food systems.

At the same time, the process of Latency highlights the persistence of structural and cultural barriers. Male dominance in cooperative leadership, entrenched gender stereotypes, and resistance from conservative community actors remain obstacles to deeper normative change. Cleaver (2005) warns that social structures often reproduce inequalities, even within seemingly inclusive institutions. In Talisayan, while many women have gained recognition as entrepreneurs, others—especially younger, unmarried, or less experienced members—continue to struggle for equal footing in decision-making spaces.

Despite these limitations, KUB provides an arena where new social meanings are constantly negotiated and reproduced. Normative change is visible in the increasing acceptance of women as economic actors, the recognition of their contributions to household and community livelihoods, and the gradual reshaping of intergenerational attitudes toward gender roles. By fulfilling the Latency function, women in Talisayan not only secure immediate economic benefits but also contribute to long-term cultural transformation that embeds empowerment within the fabric of community life.

Synthesis and Implications

The analysis of women's empowerment through *Kelompok Usaha Bersama* (KUB) in Talisayan shows that the four imperatives of Parsons' AGIL framework—Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency—operate not as isolated functions but as an interdependent system. Adaptation through product diversification and micro-enterprise provides the material foundation for Goal Attainment, enabling women to set and pursue collective objectives such as market access and income stability. These objectives are reinforced by Integration, where trust-based networks and solidarity within KUB reduce risks, coordinate production, and strengthen bargaining power. Over time, these processes feed into Latency, as women's visibility in leadership and entrepreneurship gradually

reshapes cultural norms and legitimizes new gender roles. In turn, shifting norms reinforce women's adaptive capacity, creating a virtuous cycle of resilience and transformation.

This synthesis underscores that empowerment in small-scale fisheries cannot be reduced to economic gains. Rather, it is a multi-dimensional and iterative process, where economic adaptation, collective goal-setting, social cohesion, and cultural change continuously interact. Empowerment is thus constructed through daily practices, negotiated identities, and collective action embedded in local institutions.

The implications extend beyond Talisayan. Empirically, the study demonstrates that grassroots collective enterprises can serve as vehicles for resilience and transformation in coastal communities, echoing calls for inclusive, bottom-up approaches to sustainability (Kabeer, 2018; FAO, 2021). Conceptually, integrating AGIL with Social Constructivism and Social Capital theory provides a novel lens: functionalist perspectives on system stability can be bridged with constructivist understandings of identity and agency, offering richer insights into gendered economies.

From a policy perspective, empowerment requires more than technical assistance. It demands structural reforms that expand women's access to markets, finance, and technology while simultaneously challenging cultural norms that limit their roles. Gender-sensitive microfinance, digital training, cooperative strengthening, and inclusive governance are critical elements. Partnerships among governments, NGOs, and private actors must recognize women not as passive beneficiaries but as co-designers and leaders of coastal development strategies.

Ultimately, the interplay of AGIL's four functions illustrates that empowerment is not a linear trajectory but a dynamic negotiation between structure and agency. By centering women's lived experiences within KUB, small-scale fisheries can be reimagined not merely as sites of vulnerability but as arenas of innovation, solidarity, and transformative change.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the empowerment pathways of women fishers in Talisayan, Berau Regency, through the lens of collective enterprise, particularly Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB). By employing a multidimensional framework that integrates Parsons' AGIL theory, Social Constructivism, and Social Capital theory, the research has shown how women's economic participation is not merely a response to livelihood pressures but a transformative process embedded in social relations and cultural change.

The findings reveal that women in small-scale fisheries are not peripheral actors but central agents in sustaining households, innovating local economies, and reshaping gender norms. Within the AGIL framework:

1. Adaptation is expressed through diversification strategies that buffer communities against ecological and market shocks.
2. Goal Attainment is achieved via collective objectives, cooperative enterprises, and cautious market integration.
3. Integration emerges from trust-based networks and solidarity, which reduce risks and enhance collective bargaining.
4. Latency reflects the slow but significant transformation of cultural norms, as women gain recognition as entrepreneurs and leaders in a sector historically dominated by men.

At the same time, persistent structural challenges—limited access to capital and technology, exclusion from formal markets, and entrenched patriarchal norms—continue to constrain the full realization of empowerment. These challenges highlight the importance of systemic interventions that integrate financial inclusion, technological upgrading, market reforms, and gender-sensitive policies.

Theoretically, the study contributes by bridging structural-functional perspectives with constructivist and social capital approaches, offering a richer framework for analyzing empowerment in gendered economies. Empirically, it provides grounded insights into how grassroots institutions like KUB facilitate empowerment from below, illustrating that transformative change emerges not only from state or corporate interventions but from women's collective agency.

Policy-wise, the findings underscore the need for inclusive fisheries development models that recognize women not as passive recipients of aid but as co-designers of sustainable futures. Integrating women's enterprises into value chains, supporting digital and financial literacy, and promoting gender-equitable norms are critical steps toward building resilient coastal economies.

Ultimately, the experience from Talisayan demonstrates that women's empowerment is a continuous process of negotiation between structure and agency, economic resilience and cultural transformation. By centering women's lived experiences and collective strategies, this study affirms that coastal communities hold the potential to move from margins to center in shaping more just, inclusive, and sustainable fisheries governance.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the need to reframe Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and community-based enterprises such as *Kelompok Usaha Bersama* (KUB) from symbolic gestures into mechanisms of participatory governance. In Berau, CSR has often been implemented in a top-down, compliance-oriented manner, producing programs that may satisfy corporate reporting requirements but fail to address structural issues such as ecological degradation, economic dependency, and gender exclusion. Based on the empirical evidence and the AGIL analysis, this study advances five interconnected strategic directions for policy and practice.

First, enhancing transparency and accountability is essential to ensure that CSR budgets, targets, and outcomes are subject to independent audits and accessible to the public. This responds directly to community demands for more open information and reduces the risk of elite capture.

Second, institutionalizing inclusive participation must move beyond tokenistic consultations. Applying methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), along with affirmative measures such as quotas for women and youth, would strengthen local agency and democratize decision-making processes.

Third, promoting local economic diversification is crucial for reducing dependency on extractive industries. CSR should prioritize programs that support micro-enterprises, agro-tourism, eco-tourism, and sustainable aquaculture—initiatives already emerging from women's KUB in Talisayan—as pathways toward long-term resilience.

Fourth, aligning CSR with regional development plans (RPJMD) would enhance policy coherence and prevent program fragmentation. This requires formal integration between company-led initiatives and local government strategies, as well as regulatory

frameworks that hold corporations accountable for contributing to public development goals.

Finally, advancing ecological sustainability must become a cornerstone of CSR implementation. This means moving beyond administrative reclamation toward substantive ecological restoration, community-based biodiversity monitoring, and investments in conservation practices that repair long-term environmental damage.

Taken together, these strategic directions highlight that CSR should not be treated merely as philanthropy or corporate image-building, but as a collaborative governance mechanism. Embedding transparency, inclusivity, economic diversification, policy alignment, and ecological justice into CSR design would not only empower marginalized groups such as women and youth but also contribute to broader sustainability transitions in resource-dependent regions.

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