

Empowerment of Fishery Products in an Islamic Economic Perspective: Strategies to Increase Fishermen's Income

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the practice of empowering fishery products of the Lambur Luar Village community in increasing fishermen's income based on an Islamic economic perspective. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was obtained through interviews and direct observation. The results of the study show that fishermen still depend on the sale of raw products to middlemen, with low added value. In the perspective of Islamic economics, empowerment should include aspects of justice, productivity, and distribution of benefits. Therefore, sharia-based strategies are needed such as strengthening cooperatives, access to halal financing, and education in seafood processing. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the importance of integrating Islamic values in the economic empowerment of coastal communities.

Keywords:

Islamic Economy, Fishermen, Empowerment, Fishery Products, Coastal Villages.



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as the largest archipelago in the world, with a coastline that stretches more than 95,000 km and abundant marine potential. However, social reality shows that coastal communities, especially fishermen, are actually one of the most vulnerable groups to poverty and economic limitations (Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan, 2022). Lambur Luar Village in East Tanjung Jabung Regency is a real reflection of this condition. Despite having direct access to productive waters, local fishermen still rely on conventional systems that have not provided significant added value to their income. Dependence on middlemen and the absence of post-harvest processing are the main obstacles in improving welfare.

From a development perspective, this problem implies that simply having natural resources is not enough without the presence of structured and directed empowerment. Therefore, the empowerment of coastal communities is the main strategy in overcoming poverty and strengthening local economic independence (Jannah, 2022; Karim, 2017; Chapra, 2000; Irawan, 2020). Islamic economics offers a holistic conceptual framework for the development of society. Not only pursuing efficiency and profit, Islamic economics is oriented towards the values of justice (*al-'adl*), balance (*tawazun*), and social responsibility (*mas'uliyah*) in every economic activity (Antonio, 2010).

The concept of empowerment in Islamic economics emphasizes the importance of asset distribution, access to resources, and the development of human potential. In the context of fishermen, this means not only increasing catches, but also building a sharia-based processing, marketing, and business management system. Empowerment that is carried out without a spiritual and ethical dimension is often not sustainable. Islamic economics exists to balance material needs and divine guidance, so that the results of empowerment can create a prosperous society both physically and mentally. The income gap between fishermen and other economic sectors in Indonesia has been in the spotlight of many parties. The low selling value of fresh fish compared to processed products shows the importance of local economic innovation. Products such as shredded fish, fish crackers, and smoked fish are examples of how added value can be created through the processing of seafood. Unfortunately, many fishing communities do not have access to training, production tools, and capital. The capitalistic economic system is often not in favor of marginalized groups such as small fishermen. Therefore, an inclusive and empowering Islamic economic approach can be a strategic alternative solution.

The principle of *maslahah* in Islam emphasizes that economic activities must provide collective benefits and not harm any party. If the potential of the sea is not managed optimally, then not only economic losses will arise, but also the waste of natural resources that are prohibited in Islam (Al-Qardhawi, 2001; Fathurrahman, 2020). Economic empowerment cannot be separated from the role of institutions. Islamic financial institutions such as BMT and sharia-based fishermen's cooperatives can facilitate the financing of fishermen's businesses with the principle of fair profit sharing and without usury. In addition to the institutional aspect, the role of the government and NGOs is also very crucial. Support in the form of training, provision of processing facilities, and market access will strengthen the competitiveness of fishermen. However, all these interventions need to be framed in Islamic values so that they do not only pursue profits, but also create economic blessings. The application of the principle of *ta'awun* (help-help) in the economic activities of the fishing community is very important to strengthen social solidarity. In Islam, economic success is not only measured by material accumulation, but also by the extent to which the benefits are distributed to others (Mannan, 2000; Azis, 2021; Yusuf, 2020; Huda, 2019).

This research is relevant because it contributes to the development of an applicable and sustainable model of coastal community empowerment based on Islamic economics. This study not only examines structural issues, but also offers a transformative approach through sharia values. By exploring local practices in Lambur Luar Village and linking them to the Islamic economic framework, this research is expected to be able to provide a conceptual and practical foundation for local governments, academics, and fishing communities to build a just, independent, and Islamic maritime economy.

METHOD

This research is designed using a descriptive qualitative approach, which allows researchers to deeply understand the social, economic, and religious context behind the practice of empowering fishery products in Lambur Luar Village. This approach was chosen because it was able to portray the reality of fishermen's lives holistically, including how they interpret the role of Islamic economics in increasing their income. Field study techniques are used to extract primary data directly from the source through active interaction with key informants such as fishermen, community leaders, seafood processing actors, and village officials (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

The data collection process was carried out through in-depth interviews which were designed in a semi-structured manner to remain focused but open to the social dynamics that emerged in the field. In addition to interviews, direct observation of fishermen's activities and the processing process of fishery products were also involved to obtain strong contextual data. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from various academic literature related to Islamic economics, fisheries regulations, and coastal empowerment policy documents. The use of this secondary data is important to enrich the analysis with relevant theoretical and normative perspectives (Creswell, 2016).

In the data analysis stage, the researcher uses techniques developed by Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction is carried out by filtering important information from the results of interviews and observations, then compiling it in the form of a systematic narrative. The data is presented in the form of a thematic matrix to facilitate the grouping of findings. Conclusions are drawn through an inductive approach by emphasizing the meaning and relationships between themes found during the research process. The validity of the data is strengthened through source and method triangulation techniques to ensure that the research results have high accuracy and reliability (Sugiyono, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the study revealed that the majority of fishermen in Lambur Luar Village still sell their catches raw without going through an advanced processing process. This causes the selling price received to be very low because it depends on the middleman market that monopolizes the distribution of marine products in the region. The lack of use of technology and weak post-harvest knowledge worsen the economic situation of fishermen.

The potential of marine products such as cod, shrimp, and squid obtained from the surrounding waters actually has high economic value if managed into processed products. However, the limitation of production facilities and the absence of joint business units make it difficult for fishermen to increase this added value (Irawan, 2020). In Islamic economics, the strengthening of the production sector must be accompanied by the process of value creation so that economic activities are not purely consumptive in nature. The Prophet PBUH strongly encouraged his people to innovate and trade productively and ethically in order to earn a living (Al-Qardhawi, 2001). Therefore, the

processing of seafood into shredded fish, fish crackers, and smoked fish is part of efforts that are in line with sharia principles.

Discussion

The principles of *maqāsid al-shari'ah*, especially *hifz al-māl* (*protection of wealth*), encourage Muslims to keep their wealth from being wasted. In this context, selling seafood without processing is considered less than optimal in maintaining and developing the potential of the treasures bestowed by Allah SWT. Empowerment programs have begun to be carried out by local governments through training in processing fishery products, but they have not yet reached the entire community. The training only targets certain groups of mothers and has not been integrated within the framework of community-based economic empowerment programs. In fact, the success of the program depends on the scale of implementation and the continuity of activities.

In addition, many fishermen experience capital barriers due to their inability to access conventional financial institutions with high interest rates. In the Islamic economic system, Islamic financial institutions such as *baitul maal wat tamwil* (BMT) and sharia cooperatives can be a solution because they provide fair financing without usury through *mudharabah* or *musharakah* contracts. Unfortunately, the presence of these sharia institutions is still very limited in coastal areas such as Lambur Luar. Lack of socialization and institutional support is the main obstacle. In fact, Islamic economics strongly emphasizes the importance of justice and the availability of capital for all levels of society.

This study also found that the potential for empowerment is strongly supported by social capital in the form of the spirit of mutual cooperation which is still strong among fishermen. In Islam, the value of *ta'awun* (*help-to help*) is strongly emphasized to strengthen the social and economic structure of society. By strengthening cooperation between fishermen, joint ventures can be formed collectively. Some fishermen groups have even started simple processing activities independently. Although the scale is still small, it shows that local initiatives can grow if they are well facilitated. There needs to be policy support to strengthen the embryo of the business. It is also important to see the role of religious leaders in guiding the community to understand the importance of halal and productive businesses in daily life. Islamic economic da'wah can encourage changes in consumptive behavior to be productive and collaborative.

Local institutions such as sharia-based fishermen's cooperatives can play a strategic role in integrating the entire value chain from production, processing, to marketing. This institution also functions as a vehicle for Islamic economic education for its members. The local government needs to take proactive steps in forming and assisting the sharia-based cooperative. The combination of state policies and Islamic values is important to create equitable economic development.

By applying the principles of Islamic economics, fishermen's economic activities are not only profit-oriented, but also blessings, distribution justice, and sustainability. Economic activities like this not only increase income, but also strengthen the social and spiritual solidarity of coastal communities. Overall, this study proves that the Islamic economic approach in the empowerment of

fishery products is very relevant to be applied to increase the income and welfare of fishermen. However, these efforts must be supported by integration between actors: the government, Islamic financial institutions, religious leaders, and the fishing community itself.

The principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *hifz al-māl* (protection of wealth), serve as a foundation for ensuring that economic resources are managed productively and not wasted. In the context of coastal communities, selling seafood without further processing represents a missed opportunity to maximize the economic potential bestowed by Allah SWT. Previous studies have emphasized that optimizing natural resources through value-added processing is crucial for sustaining livelihoods and preventing economic leakages (Karim, 2018).

Empowerment programs initiated by local governments have sought to address this gap through training in fishery product processing. However, the coverage remains limited, as such programs tend to target only small groups of women, excluding broader community participation. This selective approach reduces the effectiveness of empowerment efforts. Earlier findings also highlight that empowerment initiatives often fail when they are not designed inclusively or integrated within community-based economic frameworks (Siregar, 2020).

The sustainability of empowerment programs is determined not only by training but also by their scale of implementation and continuity. Sporadic interventions without long-term support usually yield short-lived results. A study in Aceh demonstrated that community empowerment in fishery sectors achieved sustainable outcomes only when training was accompanied by mentoring and institutional support (Rahman, 2019). Thus, the present study aligns with those findings, suggesting that continuity is indispensable.

Another major challenge lies in capital accessibility. Many fishermen struggle to secure funding due to the high interest rates imposed by conventional financial institutions. This structural limitation significantly hampers their ability to develop fish-based businesses. Consistent with this finding, Widiyanto (2021) reported that capital constraints remain one of the most persistent barriers for micro-entrepreneurs in rural Indonesia (Widiyanto, 2021).

Islamic financial institutions, such as *Baitul Māl wat Tamwīl* (BMT) and sharia cooperatives, present a potential alternative by offering interest-free financing through contracts like *muḍārabah* and *mushārahah*. These mechanisms are consistent with Islamic principles of justice and fairness. Yet, in practice, the presence of such institutions in coastal regions like Lambur Luar remains very limited. This mirrors the findings of Huda and Firmansyah (2020), who noted that the geographical concentration of Islamic microfinance is heavily skewed toward urban rather than rural or coastal areas (Firmansyah, 2020).

The lack of socialization and institutional support further exacerbates this problem. Fishermen who are unfamiliar with Islamic finance models cannot access these facilities effectively. Prior studies underline that financial literacy is a critical factor in the utilization of sharia-based financial services (Nugroho, 2019). Without adequate awareness campaigns and guidance, the benefits of Islamic finance remain underutilized.

Despite financial barriers, this study discovered that social capital plays a significant role in supporting empowerment. The strong spirit of mutual cooperation among fishermen reflects the Islamic value of ta'awun (mutual assistance). This cultural asset is critical in building collective initiatives for economic resilience. In comparison, Arifin (2017) found that communities with high levels of trust and cooperation were more successful in establishing joint economic ventures (Arifin, 2017).

Some fishermen groups have already initiated small-scale processing activities independently, which signals the potential of bottom-up innovation. These grassroots initiatives demonstrate that local empowerment can thrive when supported. Similar findings were observed by Susilowati (2020), who highlighted that micro-entrepreneurs often rely on collective action to overcome structural challenges (Susilowati, 2020).

Nevertheless, the development of these initiatives requires policy support to ensure scalability. Religious leaders also hold an essential role in guiding communities toward recognizing the importance of halal and productive businesses. Islamic preaching (da'wah) that emphasizes economic productivity rather than mere consumption has been proven to shift community behavior in favor of sustainable development (Hamzah, 2018).

Establishing sharia-based fishermen's cooperatives could be a strategic step toward integrating production, processing, and marketing activities. Such institutions can serve dual functions: facilitating economic activities while simultaneously educating members about Islamic economic values. Previous research by Azis (2019) confirmed that sharia cooperatives not only provide financial services but also act as vehicles for social learning (Azis, 2019).

Government involvement is critical in institutionalizing these efforts. Proactive measures are needed to form and mentor sharia-based cooperatives in coastal villages. The synergy between state policies and Islamic values can create a balanced framework for inclusive economic growth. This reflects the conclusions of Mufid (2020), who argued that government-religion collaboration fosters a more holistic approach to economic empowerment (Mufid, 2020).

Applying Islamic economic principles ensures that fishermen's activities are not solely profit-driven but also aligned with blessings (barakah), distributive justice, and sustainability. This multidimensional orientation distinguishes Islamic economics from conventional models, as it integrates material welfare with spiritual well-being. Similar perspectives were put forward by Chapra (2017), who emphasized that Islamic economics aims at comprehensive human prosperity (Chapra, 2017).

Moreover, this orientation reinforces social solidarity. Coastal communities engaged in Islamic-based empowerment programs often report improvements in both income levels and social cohesion. Comparative findings in Banten also highlighted that sharia-compliant economic initiatives enhance community solidarity alongside financial performance (Anshori, 2021).

This study thus provides strong evidence that the application of Islamic economic approaches

in fishery product empowerment is highly relevant for improving fishermen's welfare. However, success requires integration among multiple stakeholders' government agencies, Islamic financial institutions, religious leaders, and the fishermen themselves. This resonates with the conclusion of Abdullah (2019), who noted that inclusive stakeholder collaboration is the key determinant of sustainable empowerment (Abdullah, 2019).

In summary, while challenges such as limited capital access and insufficient institutional support persist, the opportunities for empowerment remain strong. Harnessing social capital, expanding Islamic financial inclusion, and strengthening policy frameworks are essential steps forward. Ultimately, the combination of Islamic principles and local initiatives has the potential to transform coastal economic activities into more sustainable, equitable, and spiritually grounded enterprises.

CONCLUSION

The empowerment of fishery products in Lambur Luar Village has great potential to increase the income and welfare of fishermen. However, this requires a structured and sustainable intervention. In the perspective of Islamic economics, economic empowerment not only aims to increase profits, but also ensure justice, blessings, and equitable distribution of benefits. For this reason, synergy is needed between the government, the community, and Islamic financial institutions in encouraging the processing of marine products productively, creating a fair marketing network, and providing usury-free access to capital. The implementation of Islamic economic principles in the empowerment of fishery products will help realize fishermen who are independent, just, and prosperous spiritually and materially.

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