Community-Based Village Development Strategy Leveraging Social Capital: A Case Study of Lamongan Regency

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Abstract

This study explores a village development strategy leveraging social capital, with Lamongan Regency as a case study, to foster inclusive, sustainable, and locally driven development. Social capital—comprising bonding, bridging, and linking—plays a pivotal role in facilitating interaction and collaboration both within the community and between the community and various stakeholders. This research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, utilizing data obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that social capital in Lamongan Regency significantly contributes to strengthening community solidarity, enhancing public participation, and expanding access to resources and opportunities. The bonding dimension manifests in strong kinship and local solidarity, while bridging and linking facilitate cross-group collaboration and connections with formal institutions. The pentahelix collaboration model—engaging the government, communities, the private sector, academia, and the media—emerges as an effective approach to supporting the implementation of village development strategies. However, several challenges were identified, including suboptimal cross-sectoral program integration, limited technical support at the village level, and insufficient private sector participation in empowerment initiatives. This study recommends a development strategy that integrates social capital with policies rooted in collaboration and local innovation to enhance rural community welfare. By adopting a holistic and sustainable approach, this social capital-based development model presents a strategic solution for other regions facing similar challenges.

Keywords: Village Development, Social Capital, Pentahelix Collaboration, Lamongan Regency, Community Empowerment.

Introduction

Village development has become one of the key pillars in achieving sustainable regional development, particularly in addressing socio-economic disparities and improving community welfare. According to Todaro (2000), development is a multidimensional process encompassing economic growth, social restructuring, and poverty alleviation. In Indonesia, the prioritization of village development is institutionalized through legal frameworks such as Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which emphasizes community empowerment as the primary strategy for achieving inclusive growth.

Empowerment, as conceptualized by Friedmann (1992), is a transformative process that enables communities to transition from dependency to self-reliance through the integration of participation, local autonomy, and collective action. This aligns with the people-centered development approach proposed by Chambers (1995), which underscores the critical role of social capital in fostering sustainable development. Social capital, which includes networks, norms, and trust that facilitate collective action (Putnam, 2000), plays a crucial role in strengthening community resilience and promoting sustainable development. Studies by Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986) further highlight how social capital enhances social cohesion and economic productivity, positioning it as a fundamental element in community-driven development strategies.

Lamongan Regency, located in East Java, Indonesia, serves as a relevant case study for exploring the integration of social capital into village development strategies. Despite its strong economic potential, particularly in the agriculture, fisheries, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sectors, Lamongan continues to face challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure disparities. According to the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2021–2026, several persistent issues—such as

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stagnation in education, a high prevalence of stunting, and suboptimal government program integration—remain significant obstacles to regional development.

This study aims to examine the role of social capital in village development strategies in Lamongan Regency. Using a qualitative approach, it explores how the dimensions of social capital—bonding, bridging, and linking (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000)—can be leveraged to address these challenges. Additionally, this study analyzes the role of key stakeholders, including the government, private sector, academia, and civil society, in promoting collaborative governance through the pentahelix model (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2011). By adopting this approach, this research seeks to contribute to theoretical discussions on social capital-based development while offering practical recommendations for policymakers.

The findings of this study are expected to enrich theoretical discourse on social capital and development while providing practical insights for policy formulation. By emphasizing the connection between social capital and community empowerment, this research aims to promote a holistic, collaborative, and inclusive approach to village development—one that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Literature Review

Community empowerment has been a central focus in numerous development studies, particularly in rural contexts. It is conceptualized as a transformative process that shifts communities from dependency to self-reliance, emphasizing active participation, local autonomy, and collective action. Friedmann (1992) defines empowerment as a tool for addressing poverty, which is not solely an economic issue but also a manifestation of social and political disenfranchisement. This concept highlights the importance of building community capacity to determine their own future through social structure reinforcement and individual capability development.

One of the fundamental elements of empowerment is social capital, which plays a pivotal role in fostering collaboration and solidarity within communities. Putnam (2000) defines social capital as networks, norms, and trust that enable individuals and groups to work together effectively. The three core dimensions of social capital—bonding, bridging, and linking (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000)—serve as a theoretical foundation for understanding how social relationships influence the success of empowerment programs. Bonding social capital refers to strong ties among individuals within the same group, such as families or local communities. Bridging social capital facilitates intergroup relationships, while linking social capital represents vertical connections between communities and institutions that hold resources or power.

In the context of village development, social capital has been widely recognized as a critical factor in increasing community engagement in development processes. Coleman (1988) argues that social capital enhances social cohesion, expands access to resources, and supports poverty alleviation through improved collaboration. Bourdieu (1986) similarly emphasizes the role of social capital in creating reciprocal relationships, which, in turn, strengthen overall social structures.

The significance of social capital is also closely linked to collaborative governance in village development. The collaborative governance framework, as proposed by Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2011), highlights the active involvement of multiple stakeholders, including government, the private sector, academia, media, and civil society, in the planning and implementation of development programs. The Pentahelix model not only integrates diverse perspectives but also enhances policy effectiveness through synergy among participating actors. The success of this model, however, relies on trust-building, effective communication, and strong coordination among stakeholders (Fitrianti et al., 2019).

Social capital provides a strong foundation for the implementation of inclusive collaborative governance. Kilpatrick et al. (2003) argue that social networks and trust norms enhance the effectiveness of development programs by strengthening community participation. Social capital also enables communities to access information, mobilize resources, and develop locally relevant solutions. In this context, social capital is not just a resource but also a mechanism for facilitating collective action, which is essential for the success of development initiatives.

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Social capital-based empowerment requires a systematic approach to ensure that key elements—trust, norms, and social networks—are well-integrated into development strategies. Cook and Macaulay (1997) introduce the ACTORS model, which comprises six key elements: authority, confidence and competence, trust, opportunity, responsibility, and support. This model provides a comprehensive framework for managing and facilitating community empowerment, particularly in rural settings.

Case Study: Social Capital in Village Development in Lamongan Regency

Lamongan Regency presents an intriguing case for understanding the integration of social capital into village development strategies. The region has significant economic potential in agriculture, fisheries, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). However, persistent challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and infrastructure gaps continue to hinder development. According to the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2021–2026, social capital has been identified as a strategic asset in addressing these challenges. The bonding dimension is leveraged to strengthen social relationships within communities, bridging fosters cross-group collaboration, and linking enhances effective connections between the community and local government.

In practice, Lamongan Regency has harnessed social capital to enhance community participation in development programs. For instance, collaborations between local government, academia, and the private sector have been instrumental in supporting community-based empowerment initiatives. Public forums and training programs have facilitated active engagement in decision-making processes that impact local livelihoods. Additionally, media plays a crucial role in promoting empowerment programs and raising awareness about the importance of social capital.

Research Contribution and Policy Implications

This study aims to analyze how social capital can be integrated into village development strategies in Lamongan Regency. Using social capital and empowerment theories, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of networks, norms, and trust in supporting development success. Moreover, the study explores the implementation of collaborative governance models to foster more inclusive and sustainable development.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to theoretical discourse on social capital and development while offering practical recommendations for village development policies. By emphasizing the synergy between social capital and community empowerment, this research supports ongoing efforts by governments and stakeholders to formulate effective and locally relevant development strategies.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore social capital-based village development strategies in Lamongan Regency. This method was chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth analysis of complex social phenomena, particularly concerning the integration of bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions within social capital. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the dynamics of social relationships, community participation, and stakeholder collaboration, which form the foundation for implementing village development strategies.

The research framework is anchored in social capital theory, as articulated by Putnam (2000), Woolcock and Narayan (2000), alongside the collaborative governance framework developed by Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2011). Within this theoretical context, the study seeks to understand how government, the private sector, communities, academia, and media collaborate within the Pentahelix model to optimize the role of social capital in village development.

The data collection process involves in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants, ensuring a comprehensive representation of diverse perspectives on village development strategies. The key informants include village heads, local government representatives, small and medium enterprise (SME)

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actors, academics, and community leaders. To complement the interview data, direct observations are conducted to capture real-time insights into community empowerment initiatives. Additionally, document analysis is carried out on official government reports, including the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of Lamongan Regency, to strengthen the research findings with institutional perspectives.

Data analysis follows the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction phase involves systematically selecting, simplifying, and organizing the collected information. The data display phase structures the findings in a manner that facilitates interpretation and pattern recognition. Finally, the conclusion drawing stage synthesizes key insights relevant to the role of social capital in village development strategies. By adopting this rigorous qualitative methodology, the study aims to generate theoretically grounded and empirically validated insights into how social capital can be leveraged to enhance collaborative governance and multi-stakeholder engagement in rural development.

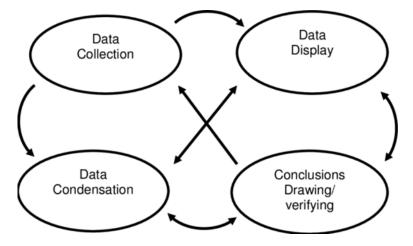


Figure 3.1. Interactive Model Analysis

Source: Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014)

Data Condensation

Data condensation is the process of selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data obtained from field notes, interviews, transcripts, documents, and other empirical sources. This phase involves summarization, coding, thematic development, categorization, and the creation of analytical memos. The data condensation process is continuous and iterative until the final report is completed, ensuring a systematic and comprehensive analysis.

Data Presentation

Once reduced, the data is structured in an academically appropriate format, allowing for further analysis and in-depth interpretation. The presentation of data is conducted systematically to ensure its relevance to the research focus, resulting in an informative and accessible report that can be utilized by various stakeholders.

Data Interpretation and Conclusion Drawing

Data interpretation is conducted by identifying patterns, models, themes, and similarities within the collected data. Through this analytical process, the study draws valid conclusions that support its objectives. In the context of social capital-based rural community empowerment, the findings illustrate the roles and strategic approaches of leadership in fostering empowered and self-sufficient rural communities.

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Data Validity

The validity of the data in this study follows the criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is enhanced through data and methodological triangulation, member checking, and peer discussions to verify the accuracy of the findings. Transferability is ensured through detailed contextual descriptions, allowing the results to be applicable in similar settings. Dependability is evaluated through internal and external audits, ensuring consistency and rigor throughout the research process. Confirmability is maintained through an audit trail, encompassing raw data, analytical records, synthesized findings, and supporting documentation, enabling the research findings to be objectively tested and verified.

The collected data was condensed into key themes, including the role of social capital in enhancing community participation, the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the impact of empowerment strategies on village development. Data presentation was conducted in the form of a descriptive narrative, supported by tables and figures to illustrate findings comprehensively.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study employed methodological and data source triangulation. Methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and document analysis, while source triangulation involved verifying data from multiple informants to ensure consistency of findings. Figure 1, for instance, illustrates community participation in mutual cooperation programs (gotong royong) as an embodiment of bonding social capital.

Furthermore, document analysis highlights a significant improvement in human development indicators in Lamongan Regency during the study period. Table 1 presents changes in poverty rates and the Human Development Index (HDI) as key indicators of the success of social capital-based development strategies.

Indicator	2020	2022
Human Development Index (HDI)	73.12	74.02
Poverty Rate (%)	13.85	12.53

Table 1. Trends in Development Indicators in Lamongan Regency

This study also adopted a participatory approach to understand how communities perceive social capital within the context of village empowerment. Observational findings suggest that the linking dimension of social capital, particularly the relationships between local government and community groups, plays a crucial role in accessing external resources, such as training programs and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

With a strong theoretical framework and a rigorous qualitative approach, this research provides valuable insights into the effective implementation of social capital-based village development strategies. The findings are expected to make a significant contribution to social capital theory and collaborative governance practices, while also offering practical recommendations for more inclusive development policies.

Results

This study reveals that the social capital-based village development strategy in Lamongan Regency has yielded significant outcomes in various aspects of community empowerment. Social capital, encompassing bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000), has served as a catalyst for strengthening social relationships, fostering cross-group collaboration, and connecting communities with formal institutions. The implementation of this strategy follows a collaborative approach, engaging key stakeholders—including government, the private sector, civil society, academia, and media—in line with the Pentahelix model (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2011).

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The bonding dimension of social capital has successfully reinforced internal solidarity through community-based activities such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and routine social gatherings. Kinship values and local traditions have provided a strong foundation for trust and collaboration among villagers. For instance, village infrastructure projects, including mosque and school renovations, have been collectively undertaken by community members through gotong royong, reflecting high levels of social cohesion.

The bridging dimension of social capital is evident in cross-group collaborations, particularly between communities and the private sector. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs have been integrated to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), although improvements are needed in terms of consistency and long-term community impact. Additionally, local governments have played a facilitating role in linking farmers, fishers, and small business groups with broader market opportunities, thereby expanding economic access for rural communities.

The linking dimension of social capital is reflected in connections between communities and government institutions. The Lamongan local government has actively positioned itself as a key facilitator, bridging local communities with external resources. Initiatives such as the issuance of Business Identification Numbers (NIB) for SMEs and community-based skill development programs have enhanced public trust in government policies.

Moreover, the trust and collaboration between stakeholders have resulted in substantial improvements in basic services and social harmony. Table 1 presents key development indicators, demonstrating an increase in the Human Development Index (HDI) and a decline in poverty rates between 2020 and 2022, highlighting the success of social capital-based development strategies.

Indicator	2020	2022
Human Development Index (HDI)	73.12	74.02
Poverty Rate (%)	13.85	12.53
Gini Ratio	0.273	0.250

Table 1. Development Indicators in Lamongan Regency (2020-2022)

Despite these achievements, the social capital-based village development strategy still faces several challenges, particularly in ensuring consistent private sector engagement and optimizing cross-sectoral government program integration. Nevertheless, the success in enhancing community participation, fostering inter-group networks, and establishing strong linkages with government institutions provides a solid foundation for the sustainability of village development efforts.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the application of social capital in village development strategies in Lamongan has not only increased community participation but has also strengthened the capacity of rural communities to address socio-economic challenges. These results underscore the importance of a collaborative approach and the strategic integration of social capital in achieving sustainable development.

Discussions

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of social capital in village development strategies in Lamongan Regency. Social capital, encompassing the bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000), has been successfully integrated into various community empowerment programs. The bonding dimension has strengthened community solidarity through kinship-based activities such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), which has proven effective in supporting local infrastructure development and fostering a sense of collective belonging. This dimension reinforces Coleman's (1988) argument that internal social relationships build trust, which facilitates collective action.

The bridging dimension is evident in cross-group collaboration between local communities and the private sector, which has supported the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). While

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs have contributed to economic empowerment, their consistency and long-term impact require further enhancement. This finding aligns with Bourdieu's (1986) perspective on the role of bridging social capital in expanding access to external resources. Additionally, bridging has enabled communities to integrate into broader networks, accelerating the alignment of empowerment programs with regional development agendas.

The linking dimension of social capital has yielded significant outcomes in fostering connections between communities and formal institutions, particularly local government. Initiatives such as the issuance of Business Identification Numbers (NIB) for SMEs and community-based skill development training serve as tangible evidence of how vertical linkages enhance community capacity in accessing economic opportunities. The Lamongan local government has played an active role as a facilitator, in line with the collaborative governance framework (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2011). Strengthening these relationships has also increased public trust in government policies, thereby reinforcing the sustainability of development programs.

The improvement in key development indicators, such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and the decline in poverty rates in Lamongan, reflects the success of social capital-based development strategies. This transformation supports the view that social capital is not only a social asset but also a critical instrument for accelerating socio-economic change. These findings confirm that the Pentahelix model, which engages government, the private sector, communities, academia, and media, fosters effective synergies to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

However, several challenges remain, particularly concerning the suboptimal integration of cross-sectoral programs and the inconsistent engagement of the private sector in CSR initiatives. Additionally, fragmented coordination among stakeholders often hinders the smooth implementation of policies. Fitrianti et al. (2019) emphasize that the success of collaborative governance depends on trust, effective communication, and strong coordination among actors. Therefore, strengthening cross-sectoral integration and increasing active participation from all stakeholders is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of the positive impact of this strategy.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of social capital as a foundation for village development strategies. The bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions significantly contribute to reinforcing community solidarity, enhancing cross-group collaboration, and fostering productive relationships between communities and institutions. With a comprehensive and collaborative approach, the social capital-based village development strategy in Lamongan Regency presents an effective model that can be replicated in other regions facing similar challenges. This research also provides a valuable contribution to the literature on social capital and collaborative governance, while offering practical insights for policymakers in designing more inclusive development strategies.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the social capital-based village development strategy in Lamongan Regency has made a significant contribution to improving community well-being and ensuring sustainable development. Social capital, comprising the bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions, has been proven to be a key element in strengthening community solidarity, fostering cross-group collaboration, and establishing effective linkages between communities and institutions. These three dimensions facilitate the implementation of inclusive development strategies by optimizing social networks, norms, and trust.

The integration of social capital into village development strategies in Lamongan, implemented through the Pentahelix approach, highlights the importance of active engagement from government, the private sector, communities, academia, and media in creating synergistic collaboration that enhances policy effectiveness. This approach has successfully improved development indicators, such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and poverty reduction, while also strengthening community capacity to actively participate in the development process. These findings confirm that social capital is not merely a social asset but also a key driver in accelerating local socio-economic transformation.

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Despite the promising results, this study also identifies several challenges, particularly the suboptimal integration of cross-sectoral programs and the inconsistent participation of the private sector in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. To ensure the sustainability of the positive impact of social capital-based strategies, a more comprehensive planning framework, stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration, and improved cross-sectoral coordination are required.

This research makes a theoretical contribution by deepening the understanding of the role of social capital in village development, while also offering practical recommendations for policymakers in designing more inclusive and sustainable development strategies. By effectively leveraging social capital, villages in Lamongan Regency have the potential to reduce socio-economic disparities and establish a replicable development model for other regions facing similar challenges.

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