

Community Empowerment Through Tourism Village Development: A Case Study of Setopatok Village Tourism Potential

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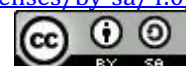
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Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 25-08-2026 Approved: 03-09-2026 Published: 30-10-2026	Tourism village development is widely promoted as a local potential based strategy for empowering rural communities in a sustainable manner. This study examines the community empowerment process generated by tourism village development in Setopatok Village, Mundu District, Cirebon Regency, West Java, Indonesia, and identifies its social and economic consequences for local residents. A qualitative descriptive case study design was applied. Data were collected between June and August 2025 through semi structured in depth interviews with 12 purposively selected informants (tourism village managers, village officials, MSME actors, and participating residents), participatory observation, and documentation, and were analysed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model with source and technique triangulation. The findings show that the village possesses natural, cultural, and economic assets, including the Setopatok reservoir landscape, fishing based livelihoods, and household food processing, which function as capital for empowerment. Empowerment proceeded through three observed stages: raising residents' awareness of village potential, strengthening human resource capacity through training and mentoring, and consolidating local institutions, particularly the tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis). Residents reported the emergence of new culinary, handicraft, and visitor service enterprises, additional household income during weekends and holidays, and greater confidence and solidarity in managing village assets. Perceived barriers include limited human resource capacity, weak promotion, and reliance on external support. The study contributes a stage based empirical account of empowerment in a reservoir based tourism village and indicates that tourism village
Keywords: tourism village, community empowerment, community- based tourism, case studies, village development.	

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development can support community empowerment when it is participatory and sustained over time.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest service sectors in the global economy, and rural areas have become an increasingly important destination type as governments and international agencies promote tourism as a tool for poverty reduction, cultural conservation, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Within this agenda, community based tourism (CBT) has been widely adopted as a development approach in which local residents own, manage, and benefit from tourism activities (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2016; Lee & Jan, 2019). What distinguishes CBT from ecotourism and conventional rural tourism is not the type of attraction but the degree of community ownership and control over the enterprise (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2019). Nevertheless, the global record of CBT is mixed. Reviews of initiatives in developing countries show that many projects fail to survive beyond the period of external funding because of weak local institutions, limited skills, elite capture, and poor market access (Zielinski et al., 2020). Scholars therefore argue that CBT should be understood not only as a form of tourism product but as a process of empowerment that must be examined from the perspective of the community itself (Dangi & Jamal, 2016; Dolezal & Novelli, 2022).

In Indonesia, the tourism village (desa wisata) programme has expanded rapidly since the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy began recognising and ranking villages through the Indonesian Tourism Village Award, and thousands of villages are now registered as tourism villages. The programme is explicitly framed as an instrument of community empowerment and village economic independence, in line with the mandate of village governments and village owned enterprises to manage local assets (Purnomo et al., 2020). Setopatok Village, located in Mundu District, Cirebon Regency, West Java, is one of the villages that has started to position itself as a tourism village. The village surrounds the Setupatok reservoir, a water body that has long supported irrigation, inland fishing, and floating net cage aquaculture, and its landscape of water, rice fields, and hills provides scenery that is attractive to urban visitors from Cirebon city and the surrounding regencies. Unlike well established tourism villages in Java, Setopatok is still at an early stage of development, which makes it a relevant site for observing how community empowerment actually unfolds rather than only its end results.

One type of tourism development that leverages the local potential of the village to create a tourism experience while improving the well-being of

the local community is known as a tourism village. Tourism villages not only offer tourism attractions and services, but also encourage communities to actively participate in the management of local natural resources, culture, and economy, resulting in sustainable community empowerment opportunities. In the context of tourism villages, the concept of community empowerment is considered a strategic approach to increasing the economic capacity and independence of local communities through direct involvement in tourism activities (Rahmah & Raharjo, 2024). The development of tourism villages encourages community empowerment through increasing the knowledge, skills, and ability of communities to manage tourism resources professionally. This includes obtaining training, forming tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), and working with relevant stakeholders to encourage inclusive and sustainable empowerment (Gautama et al., 2020). Community empowerment is also considered an essential component of community based tourism because it links economic benefits to residents' control over tourism decisions and resources (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). In a number of case studies, community empowerment through tourism village development shows that it can result in increased income, the development of local small and medium enterprises, and increased the independence of village communities (Megawati et al., 2022). This is in line with the results of empowerment research which shows that community-based approaches have a significant social and economic impact on the welfare of local communities in tourism villages (Oksavira et al., 2025).

Theoretically, this study draws on the empowerment framework developed in tourism research, which conceptualises resident empowerment in psychological, social, political, and economic dimensions. Psychological empowerment refers to residents' pride and self confidence derived from tourism, social empowerment refers to community cohesion and collaboration, political empowerment refers to residents' voice in tourism decisions, and economic empowerment refers to the distribution of tangible benefits (Joo et al., 2020; Strzelecka et al., 2017). Empirical tests of this framework indicate that empowerment is a precondition for residents' support of tourism and for their willingness to take action, and that knowledge of tourism alone does not produce support unless residents feel empowered (Joo et al., 2020). The framework is complemented by the literature on participation in CBT, which distinguishes between participation as a formal structure and participation as everyday practice embedded in local social relations (Mayaka et al., 2018). Studies of heritage and rural destinations further show that the level and form of community participation shape both

the perceived benefits of tourism and residents' support for its development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). These perspectives provide the analytical lens for examining how empowerment is produced in Setopatok Village.

Previous Indonesian studies provide useful but partial insights. Rahmah and Raharjo (2024) found that empowerment in Kampung Jawi, Semarang, was driven by local leadership and the reuse of cultural assets, whereas Megawati et al. (2022) showed that in Sumber Gempong, Mojokerto, empowerment functioned as a lever for tourism development once a village owned enterprise took over management. Oksavira et al. (2025) documented empowerment in the cultural heritage village of Pariangan, West Sumatra, while Deska et al. (2025) analysed empowerment strategies in Nagari Taram through partnership and local economic development. Closer to the present study area, Izzatur Rahim and Abijaya (2024) examined the role of the village head and village owned enterprise in developing Telaga Biru Cicerem in Kuningan Regency. These studies share three limitations. First, they concentrate on mountain, heritage, or spring based attractions, and reservoir based lowland villages near secondary cities remain largely unexamined. Second, most describe empowerment as an outcome rather than tracing it as a staged process. Third, the evidence is often presented in general terms without distinguishing the perspectives of village officials, tourism managers, MSME actors, and ordinary residents, even though international research shows that these groups experience empowerment and power differently (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022).

The urgency of this study lies in the early stage of tourism development in Setopatok. International evidence indicates that the early years of a CBT initiative determine whether benefits are shared broadly or captured by a small group, and that the absence of stakeholder collaboration and institutional capacity at this stage leads to stagnation or failure (Wondirad et al., 2020; Zielinski et al., 2020). Rural tourism can revitalise villages, but it can also marginalise residents when capital and decision making are concentrated outside the community (Gao & Wu, 2017). Documenting how empowerment is being built in Setopatok therefore provides timely evidence that can guide the village government, Pokdarwis, and regency tourism office before development patterns become locked in.

The novelty of this study is threefold. It presents the first empirical account of community empowerment in a reservoir based tourism village in Cirebon Regency, it analyses empowerment as a three stage process (awareness, capacity, institutions) rather than as a static condition, and it

contrasts the perspectives of four categories of local actors using the multidimensional empowerment framework (Joo et al., 2020).

Based on this background, the objective of this study is to analyse how tourism village development functions as a community empowerment strategy in Setopatok Village and to identify the social, economic, and participatory outcomes of that process for local residents. The study is guided by three research questions: (1) What tourism potential of Setopatok Village serves as capital for community empowerment? (2) Through what stages and mechanisms does community empowerment take place in the development of the tourism village? (3) What social and economic changes do local actors perceive as a result of tourism village development, and what barriers remain?

The benefits of this study are both practical and academic. Practically, the findings give the village government, Pokdarwis, and MSME actors in Setopatok an evidence based picture of what has been achieved and where capacity gaps remain, and they offer the Cirebon Regency tourism office a reference for supporting similar reservoir based villages. Academically, the study adds a lowland Javanese case to the Indonesian tourism village literature and extends the use of the multidimensional empowerment framework to an early stage destination.

The implications of the study concern policy and theory. For policy, the results suggest that empowerment programmes should be sequenced so that awareness raising is followed by targeted capacity building and institutional consolidation, with promotion support provided from outside the village until local marketing skills mature. For theory, the Setopatok case indicates that economic empowerment in early stage tourism villages is modest and seasonal, whereas psychological and social empowerment emerge earlier, which refines expectations about the order in which empowerment dimensions develop.

RESEARCH METHOD

Approaches and Types of Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The purpose of this study is to study the dynamics of community empowerment through the development of tourism villages in Setopatok Village and to study the processes, strategies, and experiences of local actors involved in tourism village development in real and complex contexts. This approach is also in line with the approach used in other studies that use this approach (Izzatur Rahim & Abijaya, 2024). This case study uses a descriptive design to describe the phenomenon systematically and factually. The purpose

of this design is so that the results of this research can provide a clear picture of the community empowerment process in Setopatok Village in the context of tourism village development and provide an understanding of the supporting factors and obstacles that exist. A single case design was chosen because the aim is to understand the empowerment process in depth within its real life context rather than to generalise statistically, which is consistent with the logic of case study research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Locations and Informants

The location of the study was Setopatok Village, Mundu District, Cirebon Regency, West Java, which was selected based on the growing tourism potential, community involvement in tourism activities, and the existence of real community empowerment initiatives. Fieldwork was carried out from June to August 2025. In this study, the key informants consisted of:

1. Tourism village managers, namely the chairperson and members of the tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis),
2. Village apparatus,
3. MSME actors or local economic supporters related to the tourism sector,
4. People who participate in tourism village activities.

The informant selection technique uses purposive sampling because the informants were chosen on the basis of their direct involvement, experience, and knowledge of tourism village development, not in order to be statistically representative. The criteria were: (a) tourism village managers who had held a position in Pokdarwis for at least one year; (b) village officials with responsibility for development planning or village owned enterprise affairs; (c) MSME actors who had operated a business serving visitors for at least six months; and (d) residents who had taken part in at least one tourism village activity or training. In total, 12 informants were interviewed: two Pokdarwis managers (coded M1 and M2), two village officials (V1 and V2), four MSME actors (E1 to E4), and four participating residents (R1 to R4). Interviews continued until no new themes emerged from additional informants, which occurred after the tenth interview; two further interviews were conducted to confirm saturation (Guest et al., 2020). A similar approach is applied in community-based community empowerment research, where informants are selected purposively to explore their contributions and roles in the empowerment process (Deska et al., 2025).

Research Instruments

The main instrument was the researchers themselves, supported by three tools. First, a semi structured interview guide containing 18 open questions organised around the research questions (village potential, stages of empowerment, perceived social and economic changes, and barriers), with probes adapted to each informant category. Second, an observation protocol covering the condition of attractions and facilities, visitor flows at weekends, MSME activities, and Pokdarwis meetings, recorded in field notes and photographs. Third, a document checklist for Pokdarwis activity reports, the village medium term development plan (RPJMDes), training attendance lists, and visitor records kept by the managers. The interview guide was reviewed by two lecturers in tourism and community development before use and piloted with one Pokdarwis member.

Data Collection Techniques

The following data were collected using a combination of qualitative methods:

1. In-depth interviews: were conducted with key informants through a semi-structured process to explore their experiences, perceptions, and narratives about the community empowerment process and their role in the development of tourism villages. Interviews lasted between 35 and 70 minutes, were conducted in Indonesian or Cirebon Javanese at the informants' homes, stalls, or the village office, and were audio recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim.
2. Participatory Observation: is carried out to gain an understanding of the real situation in the field, interactions between parties, the condition of tourist facilities, small and medium businesses, and socio-economic activities related to community empowerment. Observation was conducted on six occasions, including four weekend visits when visitor numbers peak and two Pokdarwis coordination meetings.
3. Documentation Study: To complete the initial data, reports on Pokdarwis activities, local economic data, photographs, and village planning documents were evaluated.

A similar data collection approach was also reported in community empowerment research in the Telaga Biru Cicerem tourism village, where interviews, observations, and documentation were used simultaneously to obtain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied ([Izzatur Rahim & Abijaya, 2024](#)).

Data Analysis Techniques

Interactive models developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña ([Miles et al., 2020](#)) are used to analyze qualitatively obtained data, which include: (1) Data Reduction: Selecting, elaborating, and emphasizing important topics from interviews, observations, and documents; (2) Data Presentation: To show the relationship between themes, the data is arranged in the form of narratives and tables; (3) Conclusion Drawn Drawing Conclusions: To answer the formulation of the research problem, the results of the analysis must be linked to the theoretical framework of community empowerment and tourism villages. This analysis model is used in many qualitative case studies of tourism villages, such as those conducted in the development of the Sumber Gempong Rice Field Tourism Village. These studies also utilize interviews and observations, as well as qualitative interpretation, to investigate aspects of community empowerment ([Megawati et al., 2022](#)). In practice, transcripts were coded in two cycles. First cycle coding produced descriptive codes (for example "training", "weekend income", "promotion"), which were then grouped in the second cycle into the three stage categories (awareness, capacity, institutions) and into the four empowerment dimensions (psychological, social, political, economic). Coding was carried out independently by two members of the research team and differences were resolved through discussion.

Data Trustworthiness and Research Ethics

Trustworthiness was pursued through source triangulation (comparing accounts of managers, officials, MSME actors, and residents), technique triangulation (comparing interview statements with observation notes and documents), and member checking, in which summaries of findings were returned to four informants (M1, V1, E1, R1) for confirmation and correction. An audit trail of field notes, transcripts, and coding decisions was maintained to support dependability and confirmability ([Nowell et al., 2017](#)). Ethically, the study was conducted with the written permission of the Setopatok Village government. All informants received an explanation of the research purpose and gave verbal informed consent before being interviewed and recorded; they were free to decline any question or withdraw at any time. Informant identities are protected through the use of codes, and photographs that show identifiable individuals are not reproduced in this article.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Tourism Potential of Setopatok Village as a Capital for Community Empowerment

The results of the study show that Setopatok Village has various tourism potentials that can be developed as tourist attractions, including natural potential, local culture, and community economic activities. Since this potential comes directly from the lives and activities of the local community, this can be the initial capital for the development of tourism villages. These findings are in line with the concept of tourism villages, which emphasize the use of local resources as a major force in developing community-based tourism (Rahmah & Raharjo, 2024). The specific forms of potential identified through observation, interviews, and documents are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Tourism potential of Setopatok Village identified in the field

No	Category	Form of potential identified	Current use for tourism	Data source
1	Natural	Setopatok reservoir landscape, sunrise and sunset viewpoints on the eastern embankment, hill slopes behind the reservoir	Photography spots, rowing boat rides operated by local fishermen, informal camping area	Observation; M1; V1
2	Natural / economic	Inland fishing and floating net cage aquaculture (tilapia and catfish)	Fresh fish sales to visitors; demonstration of net cage feeding for school groups	Observation; E1; R2
3	Agricultural	Rice fields and vegetable gardens irrigated from the reservoir	Scenic walking route; not yet packaged as agro tourism	Observation; V2
4	Cultural	Annual reservoir thanksgiving ritual (sedekah bumi), traditional Cirebon music groups, Islamic boarding school heritage	Performed once a year; occasional performances for group visits	M2; R1; documents
5	Culinary	Grilled and fried reservoir fish, fish crackers, traditional snacks produced by women's groups	Nine food stalls and warung operating at weekends; packaged snacks sold to visitors	Observation; E2; E3
6	Handicraft	Woven products and souvenirs made by housewives' groups (PKK)	Sold at two stalls near the parking area; limited designs	E4; R3

No	Category	Form of potential identified	Current use for tourism	Data source
7	Institutional	Pokdarwis (established 2023, 21 members), village government, PKK, youth organisation (Karang Taruna)	Pokdarwis manages parking, boat ride schedule, and cleanliness	Documents; M1; M2

Field observation confirmed that the reservoir is the anchor attraction. On weekend mornings, visitors arrive by motorcycle from Cirebon city, about a 30 minute ride, to photograph the water surface against the hills, hire rowing boats from local fishermen, and eat grilled fish at stalls along the embankment. The Pokdarwis chairperson described the shift in how residents perceive the reservoir:

"For years the reservoir was only a place to fish and to irrigate the rice fields. People did not think of it as something others would pay to see. When visitors started asking where they could rent a boat and buy fish, we realised the reservoir itself is our product." (M1, Pokdarwis chairperson)

In the context of Setopatok Village, tourism potential does not stand alone but is integrated with the community's social and economic activities, such as MSME activities, local traditions, and rural life patterns. This integration strengthens the community's position as the main actor, not just the object of tourism development. However, Table 1 also shows that several assets, notably the rice field landscape and the annual thanksgiving ritual, are not yet packaged as tourism products, and the handicraft segment remains small. The potential is therefore substantial but only partially activated, which is characteristic of early stage tourism villages described in the Indonesian literature (Purnomo et al., 2020).

The Process of Community Empowerment in the Development of Tourism Villages

The results of the case study show that community empowerment in Setopatok Village occurs in several stages, including increasing public awareness of the village's tourism potential, increasing capacity through training and mentoring, and being directly involved in the management of tourism activities. This process shows that the role of the community has changed from being passive beneficiaries to actively contributing to the

development of tourism villages. The three stages, their main activities, and the actors involved are illustrated in Figure 1.



Outcome: residents shift from passive beneficiaries to active managers of village tourism

Figure 1. Stages of community empowerment in the development of Setopatok tourism village (source: field data, 2025)

In the first stage, awareness raising took place through village meetings in 2022 and 2023 in which the village head and a regency tourism office facilitator presented the idea of a tourism village. A village official recalled that residents were initially sceptical:

"At the first meeting many people asked who would benefit. Fishermen were worried that visitors would disturb the net cages. We had to explain several times that the fishermen themselves could become boat operators and fish sellers." (V1, village secretary)

In the second stage, capacity strengthening was delivered through four training sessions between 2023 and 2025 covering hospitality and visitor service, fish based food processing and packaging, basic bookkeeping, and digital promotion. Training was organised by the village government in cooperation with the regency tourism office and a local polytechnic, and was attended by 47 residents, the majority of them women from the PKK group. An MSME actor explained the practical effect of the food processing training:

"Before the training I only sold fresh fish. Now I make fish crackers and packaged grilled fish that visitors take home, so I still have sales on weekdays when nobody comes to the reservoir." (E2, food stall owner)

In addition, the involvement of local institutions such as tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) is essential to ensure that the community and village governments meet their expectations. These organizations serve as a place to learn together and allow communities to participate. In the third stage, institutional strengthening was visible in the formalisation of Pokdarwis with

21 members, written rules for boat operation and parking fees, a rotation system for stall placement, and a monthly coordination meeting attended by village officials. Observation of two Pokdarwis meetings showed that decisions on fee sharing (70 percent to operators, 30 percent to Pokdarwis for maintenance) were made by vote, indicating an emerging form of political empowerment in which residents have voice in tourism decisions (Joo et al., 2020). Nevertheless, residents who are not Pokdarwis members expressed a more distant view:

"I join the gotong royong to clean the embankment, but decisions are made by the Pokdarwis board. We hear the results afterwards." (R3, resident)

This contrast between managers and ordinary residents shows that participation in Setopatok is still concentrated in the organising core, a pattern also reported in CBT research where participation as practice lags behind participation as formal structure (Mayaka et al., 2018).

The Impact of Tourism Village Development on Local Communities

The development of tourism villages in Setopatok Village has a substantial and widely perceived impact on people's lives, especially in economic and social terms. In the reservoir based economy of fishing and floating net cage aquaculture, the emergence of new business opportunities such as culinary, handicrafts, and tourism services increases community income, which makes the role of tourism villages as an option for local economic development stronger. Table 2 compares the condition before the tourism village initiative with the current condition using indicators drawn from Pokdarwis records, training documents, observation, and interviews.

Table 2. Social and economic indicators of change in Setopatok Village, 2022 compared with 2025

Indicator	Before tourism village initiative (2022)	Current condition (2025)	Source of evidence
Micro enterprises serving visitors	3 food stalls, no souvenir sellers	11 food and snack stalls, 2 souvenir stalls, 6 boat ride operators	Pokdarwis records; observation
Weekend visitor volume	Not recorded; mostly local anglers	Approximately 150 to 300 visitors per weekend day; up to 600 during holidays	Pokdarwis parking records (Jun to Aug 2025)

Indicator	Before tourism village initiative (2022)	Current condition (2025)	Source of evidence
Additional household income (stall operators)	None from tourism	Reported Rp300,000 to Rp800,000 per weekend day in net sales; income is seasonal	Interviews E1 to E4
Residents trained in hospitality, food processing, or digital promotion	0	47 residents across four training sessions (2023 to 2025)	Training attendance lists
Local institutions involved	Village government only	Village government, Pokdarwis, PKK women's group, Karang Taruna, fishermen's group	Documents; M1; V1
Community gotong royong activities related to tourism area	Occasional cleaning of embankment	Monthly cleaning and gazebo maintenance organised by Pokdarwis	Observation; R1 to R4
Promotion channels	Word of mouth	Word of mouth, Pokdarwis Instagram account (updated irregularly), village website page	Observation; M2

The economic change is real but modest and seasonal. Stall operators reported net sales of Rp300,000 to Rp800,000 on a weekend day, while weekday income is minimal; boat operators earn fees only when visitors are present. One fisherman turned boat operator summarised the trade off:

"On Saturdays and Sundays I earn more from the boat than from fishing. On weekdays I go back to the nets. So tourism is extra income, not yet the main income." (E1, boat operator and fisherman)

The development of tourism villages has a social impact by increasing community participation in social activities, increasing social solidarity, and increasing community confidence in managing the potential of their villages. Residents described the monthly cleaning and gazebo maintenance as a new occasion for cooperation across neighbourhoods, and women in the PKK group stated that selling snacks at the reservoir had given them a reason to meet regularly and a sense of being recognised in the village. Village officials, in turn, pointed to the tourism village as a source of pride that had increased

attendance at village meetings. However, the results of the study also show that there are challenges, such as limited human resources, suboptimal tourism promotion, and dependence on external support. This challenge confirms that community empowerment in tourism villages is a long-term process that requires consistency in mentoring and strengthening local capacity. Promotion is a concrete illustration. The Pokdarwis Instagram account is updated only when the member responsible has time, visitor records are kept on paper, and managers acknowledged that most visitors still come through word of mouth. Dependence on external support is also evident: all four training sessions were funded by the regency government or the polytechnic, and Pokdarwis has no independent budget beyond the 30 percent share of boat and parking fees.

Discussion: Tourism Villages as a Sustainable Empowerment Strategy

Returning to the research objective, the findings can be assessed against each of its three components. With respect to the empowerment process, the Setopatok case confirms the three stage pattern of awareness, capacity, and institutional strengthening reported in Kampung Jawi ([Rahmah & Raharjo, 2024](#)) and in Sumber Gempong ([Megawati et al., 2022](#)), but it differs in the trigger of the process. In those cases, a charismatic local leader or a village owned enterprise initiated development, whereas in Setopatok the initiative came from the village government and an external facilitator, with Pokdarwis formed afterwards. This sequence resembles the government led pattern identified by Purnomo et al. ([2020](#)) and helps explain the dependence on external support observed in this study.

With respect to economic impact, the evidence in Table 2 supports earlier Indonesian findings that tourism villages create new micro enterprises and additional income ([Deska et al., 2025](#); [Oksavira et al., 2025](#)), but the Setopatok data add an important qualification: the gains are seasonal and concentrated among stall and boat operators. This is consistent with international research showing that economic empowerment in CBT is often limited in scale and unevenly distributed in the early years ([Lee & Jan, 2019](#); [Zielinski et al., 2020](#)). Interpreted through the multidimensional framework, psychological empowerment (pride in the reservoir) and social empowerment (gotong royong, PKK cohesion) emerged earlier and more broadly than economic empowerment, while political empowerment is present for Pokdarwis members but weak for other residents. This ordering supports the argument that empowerment dimensions do not develop simultaneously ([Joo et al., 2020](#); [Strzelecka et al., 2017](#)) and echoes the finding from rural Bali that

empowerment in CBT depends on the quality of partnerships and the distribution of power among local actors ([Dolezal & Novelli, 2022](#)).

With respect to participatory capacity, the contrast between managers and non member residents shows that participation in Setopatok is still structural rather than fully practised ([Mayaka et al., 2018](#)). Comparative work on CBT in developing countries identifies exactly this configuration, a committed core group supported by government and limited broad based ownership, as a condition that can either mature into genuine community control or stagnate when external support ends ([Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018](#); [Yanes et al., 2019](#)). The weak promotion and absent budget identified here are the same inhibiting factors highlighted by Zielinski et al. ([2020](#)), and the reliance on multi stakeholder training mirrors the collaboration requirement stressed by Wondirad et al. ([2020](#)). The Setopatok findings therefore do not simply confirm earlier Indonesian studies; they specify the stage at which empowerment is partial and indicate that social entrepreneurship among MSME actors, such as the move from fresh fish to packaged products, is one route through which economic empowerment can broaden ([Aquino et al., 2018](#)). On this basis, tourism village development in Setopatok can be regarded as a promising rather than a proven empowerment strategy, whose sustainability depends on building marketing capacity, widening participation beyond the Pokdarwis core, and reducing dependence on external funding.

CONCLUSION

Before the tourism village initiative, the Setopatok reservoir was used by residents of Setopatok Village only for irrigation and fishing, and tourism generated no local income. This qualitative case study set out to analyse how tourism village development has functioned as a community empowerment strategy and what social, economic, and participatory outcomes residents perceive. The findings show that empowerment in Setopatok has proceeded through three stages: awareness of the reservoir and cultural assets as tourism capital, capacity strengthening through four training sessions reaching 47 residents, and institutional strengthening through a formalised Pokdarwis with written rules and benefit sharing. The main outcomes are the growth of visitor serving micro enterprises from three to thirteen, seasonal additional income for stall and boat operators, stronger cooperation and confidence among residents, and an emerging voice for Pokdarwis members in tourism decisions. The remaining barriers are limited human resource capacity, weak

and irregular promotion, and dependence on regency and university support for training and funding.

The specific contribution of the Setopatok case is to show that, in an early stage reservoir based tourism village, psychological and social empowerment emerge before economic and political empowerment, and that participation is concentrated in the organising core. These findings describe Setopatok Village and should not be read as evidence that tourism villages in general are an effective empowerment strategy; the case indicates a promising process whose outcomes are still partial.

This study has limitations. It is based on a single village, 12 informants, and three months of fieldwork, and the economic indicators rely on self reported sales and Pokdarwis records rather than audited data. Perspectives of visitors and of the regency tourism office were not collected. The findings are therefore bounded by the context and period of the study.

Several practical recommendations follow. The village government and Pokdarwis should assign a dedicated promotion team and move visitor records to a simple digital system so that marketing decisions can be based on data. Participation should be widened by rotating non member residents into Pokdarwis working groups and by packaging the rice field route and the annual thanksgiving ritual as products that involve farmers and cultural groups. The regency tourism office should shift its support from one off training towards mentoring and seed funding for Pokdarwis, with a clear phase out plan to reduce dependence. Future research should follow Setopatok over a longer period to test whether economic and political empowerment broaden as expected, compare several reservoir based villages in Cirebon and neighbouring regencies, and measure resident empowerment quantitatively using the multidimensional empowerment scale so that the qualitative patterns identified here can be verified.

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