

The Concept of Strategy in Community Empowerment: A Literature Review

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Abstract. Empowerment is a planned effort designed to change or reform an individual or community/society from a state of powerlessness to become empowered with an emphasis on independence. This study aims to be able to see how strategies can be carried out to empower the community. This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach. The research data used in this study came from various previous studies and research results obtained through the literature study method. The results of this study then found that community empowerment is an approach that aims to change conditions of powerlessness to become empowered through increasing independence and active participation. This concept involves providing access to resources, knowledge, and skills to the community so that they can take a role in managing development and determining their future direction. Although different challenges and contexts need attention, empowerment remains an important key in achieving sustainable development.

Keywords: *Empowerment, Community, Strategy.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The concept of empowerment grew from the 1970s and continued to develop until the 1990s. According to Pranarka and Vidhyandika, this concept has thoughts that are in line with various schools of thought that developed at the end of the 20th century, commonly known as postmodernism (Harkness & Super, 2020). The flow of postmodernism, which includes existentialism, phenomenology, personalism, neo-Marxism, Freudanism, and various schools of structuralism, focuses on attitudes and opinions that are oriented towards anti-system, anti-structural, and anti-determinism jargon applied to the world of power. The concept of empowerment can be seen as a result of and a reaction to the mind, social order, and culture that develop in a society (Patrick & Hollenbeck, 2021).

Empowerment is an emotive word that appeals to some people. The term empowerment contains a power that is believed by some people to be able to change conditions for the better. People are drawn to it because it seems to offer something that doesn't exist at the moment but is capable of changing their lives. This word conveys the idea that people are in control of themselves and their environment, which expands their abilities and insights and evaluates themselves to a greater degree of achievement and satisfaction (Ye & Yang, 2020).

At its inception, the concept of empowerment aims to find new alternatives in community development. The process of empowerment thus constitutes the empowerment of an absolute system of power. The concept of empowerment replaces it with a new system, which gives important attention to the idea of man and humanity (humanism) (Ward et al., 2022). According to Pranarka and Vidhyandika, the idea of humanism has something in common with things put forward by phenomenology, personalism, and existentialism. These schools reject all forms of power that lead to the dehumanization of human existence. Likewise, neo-Marxist, Freudianism, and others challenge the dehumanization produced by capitalism, industrialization, and technology (DeRobertis, 2023).

Community empowerment is a big strategy in the paradigm of people-centered development (people-based development). This method acknowledges the significance of society's ability to enhance self-reliance and inner resilience. This can be achieved by exerting internal influence over crucial material and immaterial assets through the redistribution of ownership or capital. This approach sees that social problems that exist in society are not solely the result of behavioral deviations or personality problems, but also a result of structural problems, wrong policies, inconsistencies in policy implementation, and the absence of community participation in development (Alraouf, 2021). Centralized development can hinder the growth of public awareness that existing social problems are community problems so they are unable to utilize the potential and existing social resources to overcome them. In addition, the existing structural conditions do not provide an opportunity for the community to articulate their aspirations and realize their potential so the community is in a powerless condition. It is in this situation that a reorientation of the development paradigm becomes an urgent need (ElMassah & Mohieldin, 2020).

In terms of concept, the notion of empowerment originates from the term 'power'. The fundamental concept behind empowerment is closely tied to the idea of power. Power frequently links with our capacity to influence others to act according to our desires, irrespective of their preferences and concerns. Conventional social science highlights that power is a static or unalterable element (Annan et al., 2021).

Genuine power goes beyond the interpretation mentioned earlier. Power is not a vacuum or something separate. It invariably exists within the backdrop of social interactions among individuals. Power originates within social connections, which means that both power itself and the relationships it involves can undergo transformation. Consequently, the idea of empowerment as a transformative process carries significant meaning (Grossmann et al., 2021). The probability of the empowerment process unfolding hinges on two factors:

1. The mutability of power. If power remains unalterable, the potential for empowerment diminishes entirely.
2. The potential for power to expand. This notion underscores a dynamic rather than a fixed conception of power (Coy et al., 2021).

Based on the brief explanation above, this research then decided to be able to see how empowerment can be carried out and the impact it has on society in general.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Empowerment

Empowerment means a state of being empowered. While empowerment means the process or effort to make something empowered. This understanding is more or less the same as Payne's opinion, regarding the purpose of empowerment. As per Payne, the central objective of empowerment is to support clients in acquiring the authority to decide and define the steps they intend to undertake, ones that pertain to their own selves. This encompasses mitigating the impacts of individual and societal obstacles that impede action. Conversely, Shardlow's findings propose that empowerment revolves around the issue of how individuals, groups, or communities endeavor to command their own lives and mold their future in alignment with their desires (Buckingham et al., 2023).

In the societal context, empowerment pertains to the capability of individuals who coexist within a society, working collectively to enhance the empowerment of the respective community. Those who possess sound physical and mental well-being, education, and resilience naturally exhibit elevated levels of empowerment. Community empowerment constitutes a foundational factor that grants a community the capacity to endure and, in a constantly evolving manner, propel its own growth and attain advancement (Jacob et al., 2023).

Communities have the ability or potential as well as other communities or layers of society. It's just that the ability or power for one reason or another is still potential. Turning this potential or power into reality is where the role of empowerment must be able to change the behavior of individual people to become empowered (empowerment) so that they can help themselves (Abdullah et al., 2022). Hence, empowerment embodies a community endowed with the resources of opportunities, knowledge, and competencies, all of which augment their aptitude to shape their forthcoming course and actively engage in shaping the trajectory of their societies. Likewise, Kartasasmita's perspective aligns within this framework, portraying empowerment as a concerted endeavor and progression that facilitates communities in harnessing their available resources (Dhokai et al., 2023).

Community empowerment as a process to achieve empowerment cannot be separated from internal factors and external factors. According to Rogers, internal factors in this case are factors related to individuals in society such as age, education, gender, number of dependents, socioeconomic status, and experience, while essential external factors can be the role of outsiders such as the role of facilitator, physical environment, social environment, economic environment and availability of business funds/capital (Homayuni et al., 2021).

Pranarka and Vidhyandika posit that the empowerment process encapsulates two inclinations. Primarily, the process accentuates the act of conferring or transmitting certain "power, potency, or capability" to the community, thereby enhancing individual empowerment. This inclination can be labeled as the principal facet of the empowerment's essence. Secondly, the process underscores the act of invigorating, spurring, or motivating individuals to cultivate the capacity or empowerment needed for shaping their life choices (Saleh & Riyadi, 2023).

The empowerment process becomes very important when people have a realistic understanding of what is to be achieved. Thus empowerment allows everyone to gain and receive additional skills and responsibilities. A certain amount of coaching and development is needed when someone hopes to master certain skills (Tripathi et al., 2020). Within the framework of empowerment, as outlined by Prijono and Pranarka, individuals stand as the focal subjects. The empowerment process centers on furnishing the community with the capacity for self-empowerment, concurrently fostering and motivating individuals to cultivate the competence or empowerment necessary for making pivotal life decisions (Utami & Godjali, 2020).

Moreover, it is asserted that empowerment should be directed towards segments of society that have been marginalized. It is with this perspective that endeavors towards community empowerment should initially focus on establishing an environment conducive to the growth of the community's potential. In this context, the initial premise lies in acknowledging that each individual, every society, possesses latent potential that is open to cultivation. This underscores that no society is entirely devoid of power, as such a state would lead to its eventual decline (van Hoof et al., 2021). Empowerment constitutes an endeavor to foster inherent power, achieved through the means of encouragement, motivation, and heightened awareness of latent capabilities, with the aim of nurturing and amplifying them. Subsequently, these initiatives are accompanied by fortifying the innate potential or strength of the community. Within this framework, the process necessitates a series of constructive measures beyond the mere establishment of a favorable climate and environment (Zainuri & Huda, 2023). This reinforcement entails tangible actions and encompasses the provision of diverse resources, alongside facilitating access to a range of opportunities aimed at bolstering community empowerment. Consequently, the process of empowerment, directed towards cultivating a potent and capable society, encompasses not solely enhancing the capacities of individual community members but also fortifying its institutions. Integrating contemporary

cultural principles like diligence, frugality, transparency, accountability, and more, is an integral facet of the empowerment endeavor itself (Mass et al., 2021).

2. Community

M.J. Herskovits asserts that society constitutes a structured collective of individuals united by a particular lifestyle. In contrast, J.L. Gillin and J.P. Gillin propose that society encompasses the most extensive assembly of individuals sharing common customs, traditions, attitudes, and a sense of cohesion. S.R. Steinmetz contributes a restrictive definition, defining society as the broadest human assemblage, encompassing smaller human clusters with interconnected and recurrent associations (Cormier & Buikstra, 2021). MacIver's viewpoint contends that society embodies a framework of methodologies and protocols, authority structures, and reciprocal support mechanisms. It encompasses various groups and other social segments, serving as a mechanism for regulating human conduct and autonomy. This intricate and perpetually evolving system is akin to a network of dynamic social interactions (Jackson, 2023).

Hence, society emerges from the presence of a gathering of individuals who have coexisted and collaborated over an extended duration. In that long period, unorganized human groups experienced a fundamental process, namely:

- a. Adaptation and forming a behavioral organization of its members.
- b. The emergence of a slow, group feeling or *lesprit de corps*. The process usually works unconsciously and is followed by all group members in an atmosphere of trial and error. In order not to get confused in using the terms, the group/group here is every social human association that establishes social relations between one another. as a reciprocity. The group has not been consciously organized. Examples are crowds, classes, primary and secondary groups, and large organizations (Tekin et al., 2021).

The concept of "community" derives from the Arabic term "syaraka," denoting participation or involvement. Meanwhile, in English, "society" refers to a collective characterized by social engagement, transformative interactions, and a shared feeling of unity. In alternative literature, "society" is also referred to as a social system. It additionally signifies the interconnectedness of human existence, guided by an enduring set of customs and underpinned by a shared sense of identity (Adityo, 2022).

Karl Marx articulated that society constitutes a framework marked by structural or evolutionary strains, arising from clashes amid economically segregated factions. Then Max Weber argued that society is a structure or action that is determined by the expectations and values that are dominant in its citizens. Meanwhile, Selo Soemardjan argued that society is people who live together and produce culture (Meger & Sachseder, 2020).

The genesis of social groups or societies occurs as humans employ their thoughts, emotions, and aspirations to respond to their surroundings. Humans possess an innate inclination to remain interconnected. This perpetual and unbroken interconnection gives rise to a configuration of interplay known as a pattern of social interaction (Allen et al., 2022).

C. METHOD

This research will be carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach to dig deeper into the concept of community empowerment strategy. A qualitative approach will enable researchers to understand the context and complexity of empowerment strategies in depth. The data used in this research comes from the results of research and previous studies regarding community empowerment. By combining data from various sources, including previous studies, this study will attempt to develop a comprehensive understanding of the concept of community empowerment strategy. This study aims to develop a more robust conceptual

framework regarding community empowerment strategies. Through analysis of the data that has been collected, general patterns, successes, and challenges associated with various empowerment strategies will be identified. In this case, a qualitative approach makes it possible to explore the meaning behind the data and relate findings to relevant theories. Thus, this research will provide deeper insight into how community empowerment strategies can be implemented effectively, based on the experiences and views of those in the field.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Empowerment Indicator

Empowerment represents a pathway toward attaining objectives. Envisaged as a process, empowerment encompasses a sequence of endeavors aimed at fortifying the influence or capability of marginalized factions within society, encompassing individuals grappling with poverty-related issues. As a goal, empowerment alludes to the conditions or outcomes sought through societal transformation; specifically, enabling the impoverished to hold sway, possess knowledge, and competence to fulfill their physical, economic, and societal requirements. This encompasses elements like self-assurance, articulation of aspirations, livelihood establishment, engagement in communal pursuits, and self-sufficiency in life's endeavors.

The definition of empowerment as a goal is often used as an indicator of the success of empowerment as a process. According to Suharto, several empowerment indicators referred to as the empowerment index are:

- a. Mobility freedom pertains to an individual's capacity to venture beyond their domicile or local vicinity, encompassing activities like visiting markets, medical centers, theaters, places of worship, or neighboring residences. This degree of mobility is categorized as substantial if the person is able to undertake these journeys independently.
- b. Capability to purchase 'minor' commodities refers to an individual's aptitude to procure items essential for daily household necessities (such as rice, kerosene, cooking oil, and spices) as well as personal requisites (like hair oil, bath soap, cigarettes, powder, and shampoo). This capacity is particularly significant when individuals possess the autonomy to make decisions independently, particularly if they can obtain these items utilizing their own financial resources.
- c. Capacity to acquire 'major' commodities pertains to an individual's capability to procure secondary or tertiary goods, encompassing items like wardrobes, televisions, radios, newspapers, magazines, and family clothing. Individuals are considered to have a substantial level of this capacity when they possess the autonomy to make decisions independently, particularly if they can purchase such items using their personal finances, without requiring permission from their partner.
- d. Participation in household decision-making entails the ability to autonomously or jointly make choices with one's spouse concerning family matters. This could encompass decisions such as home refurbishments, acquiring livestock like goats, or securing business loans.
- e. Degree of independence from familial control is assessed based on whether an individual (spouse, children, in-laws) acquires money, land, or jewelry from them without consent. This evaluation also considers instances where such actions curtail the individual's ability to have children or restrict their capacity to work outside the household.
- f. Legal and political awareness involves having knowledge of the identity of local government officials at the village/district level, understanding the role of a local DPRD

(Regional People's Representative Council) member, being familiar with the name of the president, recognizing the significance of possessing a marriage certificate, and comprehending inheritance laws.

- g. Engagement in advocacy and demonstrations: An individual is deemed 'empowered' if they have taken part in a campaign or joined others in protesting against issues such as spousal abuse, neglectful wives, unequal wages, misappropriation of social aid, or misuse of authority by law enforcement and government representatives.
- h. Economic stability and contribution to the family involve possessing a residence, land, productive resources, and savings. An individual garners significant points when they possess these attributes independently or separately from their partner.

According to Sennett, Cabb, and Conway, powerlessness emerges from diverse factors including absence of economic stability, limited exposure to the political domain, restricted access to information, inadequate financial backing, absence of training, and physical and emotional strain. Theorists like Seeman, Seligman, and Learner assert that the powerlessness experienced by a collective stems from an internalization process engendered through their engagement with society. Their self-perception as feeble and impotent aligns with society's view of them as such. Seeman calls this situation the term 'alienation'. Seligman called it 'learned helplessness', and Leaner called it 'surplus powerless'.

Solomon discerns that powerlessness can result from a combination of internal and external factors. As per his viewpoint, feelings of helplessness can emanate from adverse self-evaluations, detrimental interactions with the surroundings, or arise due to impediments and obstacles stemming from the broader environment.

- a. Negative self-assessment. Powerlessness can come from the existence of a negative judgment attitude that exists in a person which is formed due to negative judgments from other people. For instance, women or minority groups often experience powerlessness due to their socialization, which has ingrained in them the perception that they lack equal influence within society.
- b. Adverse interactions with others can also contribute to powerlessness. This feeling can arise from detrimental encounters between those facing oppression and the systems that perpetuate their oppression. For instance, women or minority groups frequently encounter negative interactions with the society at large. These unfavorable experiences subsequently foster sentiments of helplessness, manifesting as lowered self-esteem, a sense of inadequacy, and a feeling of being ill-suited to engage with the social structures they are a part of.
- c. The broader environment can constrain the roles and endeavors of specific groups. Such circumstances can lead to the disempowerment of marginalized groups, preventing them from effectively expressing themselves or seizing the opportunities available within society. For example, discriminatory policies against gay or lesbian groups in obtaining jobs and education.

Empowerment shows the dimensions of the process and the dimensions of the results (outcomes) on empowered subjects. The process dimension of empowerment is the various efforts made to empower subjects. The outcome dimension shows the level of empowerment of the subject. Empowerment is essentially an effort made by underprivileged groups or local communities to have greater ability, power, influence, control, mastery, and access to resources to improve their quality of life independently.

Ife highlights that when delving into the concept of empowerment, two pivotal notions that are intrinsically linked are power and disadvantage. The definition of empowerment, intertwined with the concept of power, can be examined through various lenses, such as pluralist, elitist, structuralist, and post-structuralist perspectives.

- a. When considering community empowerment from a pluralist standpoint, it entails a process aimed at motivating marginalized groups and individuals to enhance their competitiveness in comparison to other interests. This is achieved by assisting them in acquiring and employing skills in activities like lobbying, utilizing media for political engagement, and comprehending the functioning of the system.
- b. When observing community empowerment through an elitist lens, it involves efforts to integrate with and exert influence over the elite class. This is achieved by establishing alliances with the elite, engaging in confrontations, and striving for changes within the elite ranks. Society may experience powerlessness due to the considerable authority and dominance wielded by the elites across various spheres such as media, education, political parties, public policy, bureaucracy, and parliament, among others.
- c. When considering community empowerment from a structuralist viewpoint, it entails a more demanding agenda that can be attained through the elimination of structural inequalities. A society rendered powerless often stems from a prevailing structural framework that subjugates the community, encompassing aspects of class, gender, race, or ethnicity.
- d. When examining community empowerment through a post-structuralist lens, it entails a process that questions and transforms discourse. This perspective accentuates intellectual dimensions over active endeavors. Community empowerment in this context revolves around cultivating an understanding of fostering novel ideologies, analysis, and education, rather than being solely focused on actionable initiatives.

Likewise, according to Payne, empowerment requires active participation in steps, identification of needs, identification of options or strategies, decisions or choices of action, mobilization of resources, as well as the action itself, thoroughly with minimal intervention from outsiders in the community. Empowerment is a strategy with great potential to increase economic, social, and cultural transformation so that in this process, it will eventually be able to create a more people-centered development.

In the context of national development, community empowerment endeavors can be perceived through three main perspectives. Firstly, there is the establishment of an environment conducive to community growth. Secondly, there's the enhancement of the community's self-development capacities through diverse means such as financial aid, training, infrastructure development, and institutional strengthening within the regions. Lastly, there's the aspect of safeguarding through inclusive elections, fostering partnerships that benefit both strong and weak parties, and preventing unfair competition.

2. Empowerment Output

Horton posits that empowerment serves as a prospective approach for enhancing economic, social, and cultural transformation, potentially leading to a development model centered on the well-being of individuals. As exemplified by the World Bank's global initiatives, community involvement in developing nations is deemed an efficacious means to assist the impoverished by fostering a sense of agency, thereby enabling them to uplift their own lives.

Ife characterizes empowerment as a endeavor aimed at equipping individuals with resources, opportunities, knowledge, and competencies to amplify their capability to shape their destiny, as well as to engage in and impact their community's affairs. Sutrisno, on the other hand, highlights that from an empowerment standpoint, communities are endowed with the autonomy to oversee their development funds, whether sourced from the government or other entities. They are expected to be actively engaged in the entire process, encompassing the selection, planning, and execution of development initiatives.

While the articulation of the concept of community empowerment may differ among experts, its core essence can be summarized as a deliberate endeavor aimed at transforming or reshaping a community or society, shifting it from a condition of powerlessness to one of empowerment, with a strong emphasis on self-reliance. This process intends to equip them with complete consciousness and authority to shape their own future, ultimately striving to attain well-being for both themselves and their families.

3. Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is a process that aims to increase the capacity and independence of the community in overcoming various social, economic, and political problems. Several strategies can be used to empower communities, and these strategies can be implemented together to achieve optimal results.

First, a community empowerment strategy can be started with education and training. Education that provides knowledge and skills to people will help them to better face everyday challenges. Through training, people can acquire new skills that can increase their chances of finding a job or developing a business. Second, active community participation is an important strategy for empowerment. Encouraging communities to participate in decision-making and implementation of local programs will give them a sense of ownership and responsibility for developments in their environment. This participation can also increase confidence and the ability to collaborate with other parties.

Furthermore, building networks and partnerships is an important step in a community empowerment strategy. Connecting people with organizations, government agencies, and the private sector can help them access a wider range of resources and opportunities. These partnerships can support mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge, experience, and resources. Furthermore, an asset-based approach is another effective strategy for empowerment. This approach focuses on identifying and leveraging existing resources within the community, such as local knowledge, traditional skills, and social networks. By optimizing existing assets, communities can sustainably develop their potential.

Fifth, the empowerment strategy also involves a bottom-up or bottom-up approach. This means that the development of programs and policies is carried out by taking into account the aspirations and needs of the people directly. This approach can produce solutions that are more relevant and sustainable because communities become an integral part of the decision-making process. Sixth, increasing access to economic resources is also an important strategy for empowerment. This could include providing micro-enterprise capital, training in financial management, or better access to markets. By increasing access to economic resources, people can reduce poverty and improve their welfare.

Seventh, a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach is another effective strategy. Community empowerment often involves various aspects of life, including education, health, economy, and society. By integrating cross-sectoral efforts, communities can tackle problems holistically and create more sustainable impacts. Furthermore, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is also an integral part of the empowerment strategy. ICT can be used to provide access to information, online training, and networking opportunities. This allows society to stay connected to global developments and take advantage of innovation in various fields.

Ninth, local leadership development is also an important strategy. Through training and coaching, communities can develop local leaders who have a good understanding of community needs and skills to advocate for their interests. Strong local leadership can drive positive change and sustainable development. Finally, the empowerment strategy must also pay attention to the issue of gender equality. Encouraging women's active participation in

decision-making and ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities will have a positive impact on advancing gender equality and the well-being of society as a whole.

Overall, these community empowerment strategies are interrelated and can be applied holistically to achieve better results. With education, participation, partnerships, asset-based approaches, bottom-up approaches, economic access, cross-sectoral approaches, leveraging ICTs, leadership development, and a focus on gender equality, communities can take an active role in their development.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the conceptual framework and the views of the experts that have been described previously, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the concept of a community empowerment strategy. Community empowerment is an approach that has great potential in elevating the economic, social, and culture of a community. The empowerment process can lead to a more people-centered transformation, with community participation as the main key to achieving this goal. Empowerment further involves providing access to resources, knowledge, and skills to the community so that they can determine their future direction and participate actively in community development. Community empowerment focuses on efforts to change conditions of powerlessness to become empowered through increasing independence. This includes empowering communities to take an active role in managing development resources and participating in the planning and implementation processes of local programs. Through empowerment, it is hoped that people will be able to overcome challenges and take control of their future. However, it is important to admit that the concept of empowerment does not always run smoothly and has its challenges. In addition, in its implementation, community empowerment must consider cultural, social, and economic factors that are different in each context. Therefore, an effective empowerment strategy must be adaptive and contextual. In implementing empowerment, collaboration between the government, institutions, and the community is very important so that the goals of sustainable development can be achieved optimally. By understanding the concept of a community empowerment strategy that has been explained by various experts, the community, government, and civil society organizations can design and implement programs that are more effective in achieving sustainable positive changes in society. Efforts to increase active participation, empower through access to resources, and design adaptive programs will be important keys to achieving true community empowerment.

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